# PRIVATE EYE

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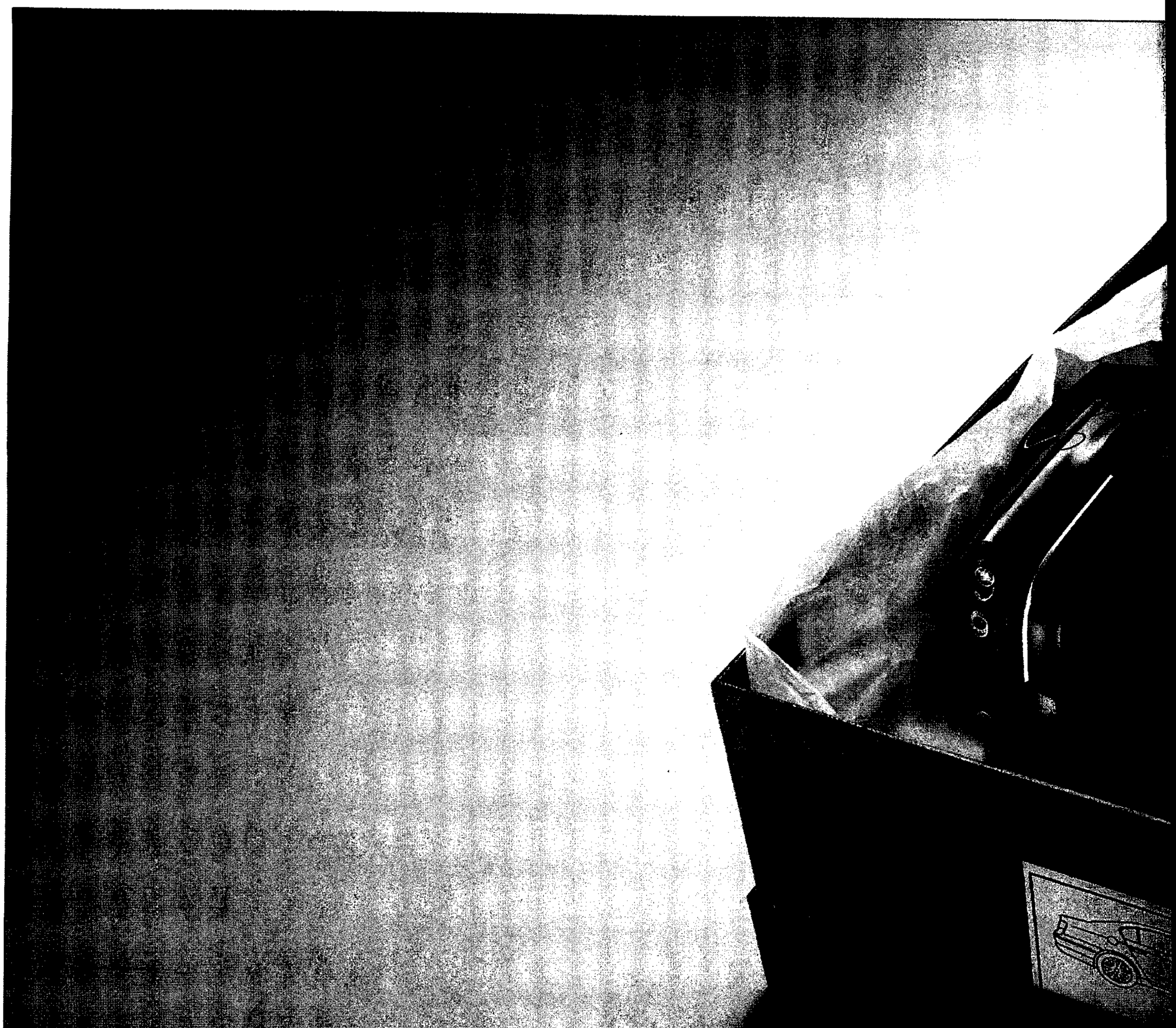
# RICHER AND JUDAS SUMMER READ



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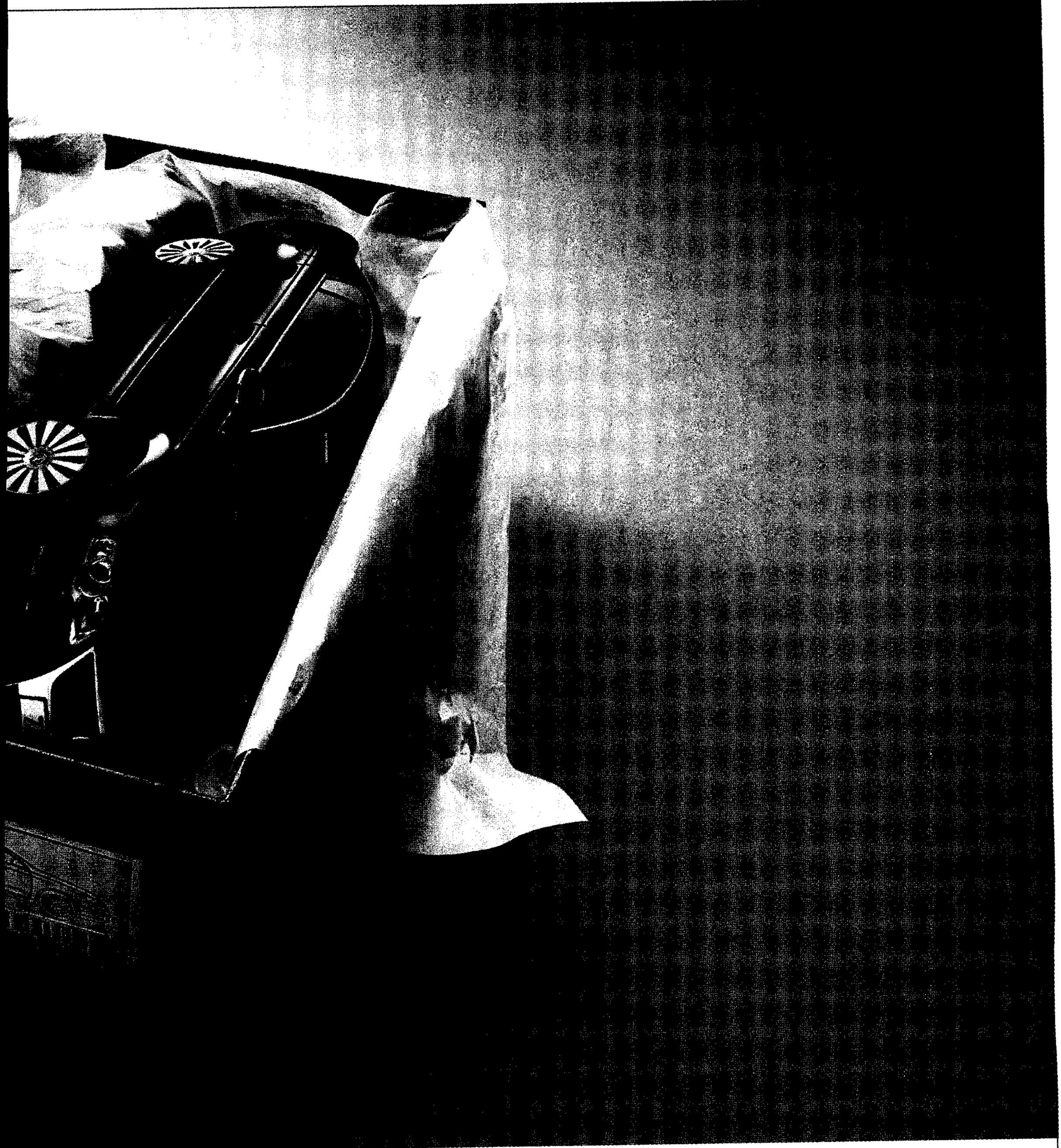

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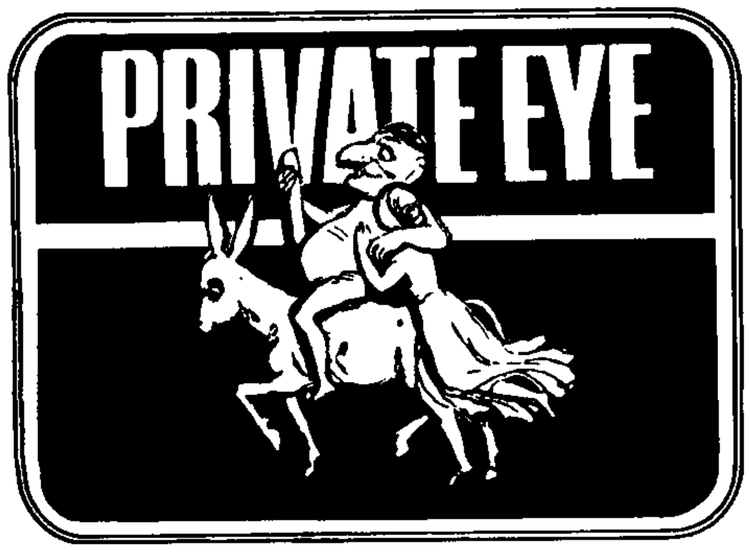


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## BROUGHT TO BOOK 1

**A SPATE of instant memoirs by former ministers, their spouses and boxwallahs is the surest sign a government is on the skids: the authors all know that within a year or so they'll be lucky to get a publisher at all, let alone a lucrative serialisation deal.**

Cherie Blair, like Alastair Campbell and David Blunkett, has pulled off the sneaky trick of pocketing a ginormous advance but then omitting anything that might upset the current Labour leadership – any full revelation of what really happened, in other words.

Hats off to John Prescott, then, for apparently spilling the beans without inhibition? Er, not quite. The blunt "honesty" of his book *Prezza: My Story* is achieved only by effectively admitting that for the past decade he's been consistently dishonest.

In return for a six-figure cheque from Headline and the *Sunday Times*, he admits that relations between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were wildly stormy throughout Labour's first term and even worse after the election victory in 2001. "More and more of my time was taken up acting as conciliator. When I consult my notes from that period, I see there must have been hundreds of phone calls, meetings, pre-summits, summits and dinners on various Blair-Brown issues. We met in Downing Street, at Chequers, Admiralty House, Dorneywood, Edinburgh, Sedgefield, Scotch Corner, even a restaurant beside a Scottish loch. They would row; they would seek my support."

Now he tells us. But what did he say at the time? Take that "restaurant beside a Scottish loch", an oyster bar at Loch Fyne where Brown and Prezza had an animated negotiation on their way back from a memorial service in 2004 on the tenth anniversary of John Smith's death. When the press got on the story, Prescott issued a flat denial, first of the gastronomic allegations ("I'm old Labour, I had kipper not oysters") and then of the suggestion that he and Brown had discussed Tony Blair. It was all "press prattle", he insisted.

This was his standard response throughout the Blair years. *On 31 December* 1998, following Peter Mandelson's resignation, Prescott told the *Today* programme that suggestions of a power struggle between Blair and Brown were "prattle".


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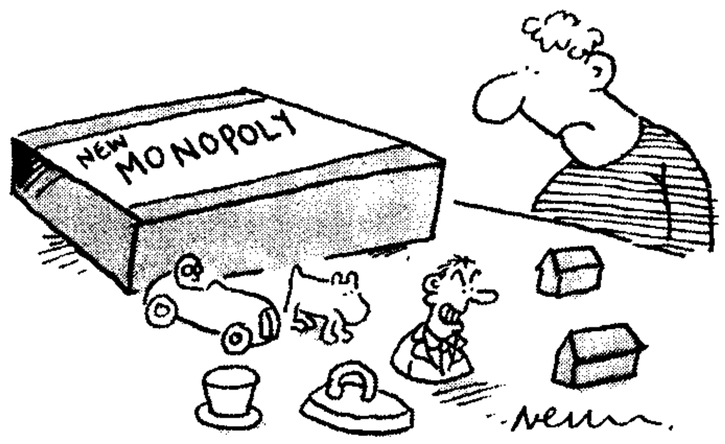



On 10 September 2004, following Alan Milburn's return to the cabinet, he again appeared on *Today* to dismiss accounts of feuds and rifts at the top of the government. "It's interpretation by the media... a load of press prattle... rubbish," he spluttered. "Most of it is made up."

Never mind the bulimia: Prezza clearly has another psychological problem, known as denial, which means that when confronted by the truth he vomits up the p-word. "There's a lot of press prattle about what went on in cabinet discussions, absolute nonsense," he told David Frost in March 2002, when asked about reports that some ministers were dismayed at the prospect of invading Iraq. "This is one of the most united cabinets there's ever been." A year later Robin Cook resigned and confirmed that it wasn't prattle at all.

Even after Blair had gone he couldn't kick the habit. Last August, Prescott angrily denounced reports that he was about to announce his retirement from the Commons as "press prattle"; less than a fortnight later, he informed his constituency association that he was retiring from the Commons.

Now, after years of telling fibs while collecting a hefty salary from the taxpayer, he collects an even bigger fee to confirm that everything he denied was true. Nice work if you can get it.

## JUST FANCY THAT!

**"I AM alarmed that you are perfectly happy to profit from tittle-tattle, betraying confidences and by character assassination..."**

So wrote a disgusted deputy prime minister John Prescott to former Washington ambassador Sir Christopher Mayer after the "red-socked fop" published *DC Confidential*, his unflattering memoir of life inside new Labour, in 2005.

## BROUGHT TO BOOK 2

**"I'M A good Catholic girl," Cherie Blair assured the *Times* last Saturday, hyping her memoirs. The Pope might beg to differ after reading Monday's extract, in which Cherie explained how baby Leo came to be conceived.**

During the Blairs' trip to Balmoral in 1998, she was disconcerted to find that all her bags had been unpacked, including "my distinctly ancient toilet bag with its range of unmentionables". The next year, "out of sheer embarrassment", she decided not to pack her contraceptives – whereupon one thing led to another.

Never mind contraception: aren't devout Catholics also supposed to tell the truth? Cherie's comment last Saturday came in a shamelessly mendacious reply to a question about her appetite for New Age guff. "That's what the press said, but basically I'm a good Catholic girl and I'm not really into New Age nonsense," she said. What about the mud rituals? "Pu-lease!" Cherie laughed incredulously. "What mud rituals?"

The *Times* of all papers should know the answer. In August 2001, while on holiday at the luxury Maroma resort hotel on the Mexican riviera, Tony and Cherie underwent a "rebirthing ceremony" in a womb-like, steam-filled pyramid on the beach. As part of the ritual, presided over by New Age "priestess" Nancy Aguilar, the Blairs had to smear their bodies with melon juice and mud before screaming to signify the pain of rebirth.

This was revealed in December 2001 by *Times* political hack Tom Baldwin, who was well known as Alastair Campbell's favourite conduit for stories. Given Campbell's distaste for Cherie's New Age dalliances, the source of Baldwin's astonishingly detailed account wasn't hard to guess. ("Those close to [Blair] suggested yesterday that he 'probably went along with it to please Cherie'," he reported.)

The story has since been confirmed by Aguilar herself. So why doesn't the *Times* stick up for itself when Cherie effectively accuses the paper of printing fiction?

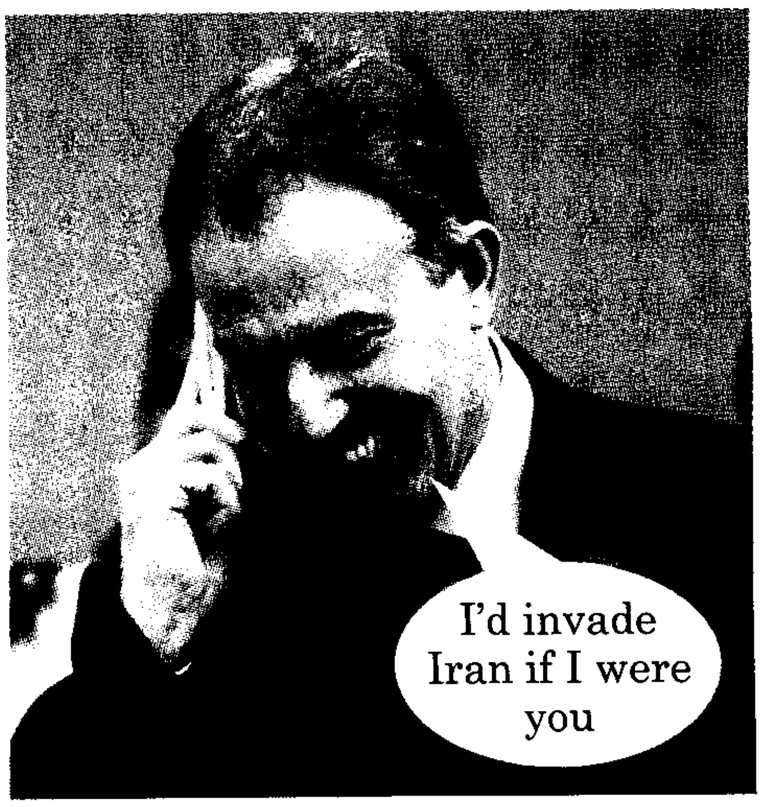
## BROUGHT TO BOOKS

**AS if one meltdown weren't enough, Labour now faces another. Party chiefs have until the end of the month to plug a £4m hole in the party's finances to avert a formal declaration of bankruptcy – yet another first for the People's Party.**

This is why the general-secretary designate, millionaire City fund manager David Pitt-Watson, has decided not to take up his post after all, having discovered that he might be personally liable for Labour's debts. If the money isn't found sharpish, those NEC members who were strong-armed by Big Gordie into voting for Pitt-Watson could also face financial ruin, as custodians of the party's finances.

Is *anyone* willing to be general-secretary under these conditions? Step forward Ray Collins, senior official and itinerant plotter from the Unite union, who is being championed by another Unite official, Charlie Whelan, Brown's former spin doctor. Charlie has been loudly broadcasting the claim that Collins has "the full backing of Tony Woodley" (joint general-secretary of Unite), which certainly came as news to Woodley. Even so, the reptilian Collins may get the job by default. But has he actually been allowed a look into Labour's non-existent bank account?

# BLAIR ADVISES BELEAGUERED BROWN



# NEWS

## PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE

**GORDON BROWN hasn't missed an opportunity to blame the financial crisis on those devious bankers.**

As he told Radio 4's *Today* programme two weeks ago: "It was wrong to have off-balance sheet activities and it's right that all these losses be declared. The quicker that is done, the better for the financial system."

Too right. But, er, what about the £35bn or so off-balance sheet private finance initiative commitments Gordon himself has kept hidden for so long? Presumably he wants to see them reported asap too?

No, actually. Long-awaited new accountancy standards that would bring some of them on the books have been delayed by yet another year while Brown and his chancellor Alistair Darling think how to soften the unflattering light they will throw on their already beleaguered finances.

## PRIVATE FASCIST INITIATIVE

**A READER alerts the *Eye* to a 1940s history of Benito Mussolini, uncovered by a US think tank, and makes an unkind comparison with Gordon Brown's current favourite policy.**

More strapped for cash than Brown ever was, "Mussolini resorted to a subterfuge to pay contractors without increasing his budget. He would make a contract with a private firm to build certain roads or buildings. He would pay no money but sign an agreement to pay for the work on a yearly installment plan. No money was paid out by the government. And hence nothing showed up in the budget.

"Actually the government had contracted a debt just as much as if it had issued a bond. But because no money passed, the whole transaction was omitted from the treasury's books. However, after making such a contract, each year the government had to find the money to pay the yearly installments which ran from ten to fifty years.

"In time, as the number of such contracts increased, the number and amount of the yearly payments grew. By 1932 he had obligated the state for 75 billion lire of such contracts. The yearly payments ran to billions. What he did by this means was to conceal from the people the fact that he was plunging the nation ever deeper into debt."

The author, American John T. Flynn, added in a footnote: "For a full and interesting discussion of this weird chapter in fiscal policy see 'Twelve Years of Fascist Finance', by Dr. Gaetano Salvemini, 1935". So yes: the private finance initiative, cornerstone of "eleven years of Brownite finance", was in fact one of *Il Duce's* barmier ideas.

## BIG SCIENCE

**"WE WERE in and out and in and out and now we're back in again," said Professor Richard Holdaway, describing farcical shenanigans surrounding the UK's funding of the Gemini Observatory, an international star-gazing project based in Chile and Hawaii.**

Prof Holdaway was addressing the Commons innovation, universities, science and skills committee, which believes the UK's handling of its physics funding crisis has made it look like an "unreliable" and "incompetent" partner for international science projects. And who can disagree?

When the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) announced last year that it was to pull the plug on the UK's share of the Gemini Observatory, it came as a bolt from the blue to astronomers (*Eye* 1200). But pulling out would incur a £7m penalty (not helpful when the STFC already faced an £80m funding deficit); so the announcement in February that the UK was not after all going to withdraw was hailed as a reprieve. In fact it's only half-a-reprieve.

As the committee's report reveals, the UK will now be flogging off "50 percent of our time on the two telescopes" to other countries. So UK taxpayers will be funding the observatory, while UK scientists star-gazing time will be sold off to help pay for the big expensive projects, such as the Diamond Light Synchrotron. Brilliant!

# Street of Shame

**"MR JOHNSON is not a politician. He is an act," thundered Simon Heffer in the *Telegraph* just days before the mayoral election.**

"For some of us the joke has worn not thin, but out. Yet many less cynical than I am find it appealing… He has had stooges all through journalism, who did significant parts of his various jobs for him, usually with little thanks or reward. And now there are stooges in politics… Where is the evidence of his adroitness in administration, his sense of responsibility, his ethic of public service?"

Well, some might think Johnson's sense of responsibility was demonstrated by his 2004 trip to Liverpool to make a public apology for a *Spectator* editorial which, in his words, "imposed an outdated stereotype" on the city and included crass mistakes about the circumstances of the *Hillsborough* disaster in which 96 people died. Although Johnson never attempted to shift the blame from himself, the offending piece had in fact been written by one of his journalistic stooges, one Simon Heffer.

Nice to see he remains so grateful for the favour the boss did him!

**"THE true, devastating scale of rising prices is revealed today by the new *Daily Mail* Cost of Living Index," boasted that paper on 18 April.**

"It shows that families are having to find more than £100 a month extra this year to cope with increases in the cost of food, heat, light and transport. According to the consumer price index, inflation is running at only 2.5 percent. Yet the *Mail*'s index finds that food costs alone are rising at 15.5 percent a year – more than six times the official rate."

Two days later the *Daily Mail* raised its own cover price from 45p to 50p – a staggering 11 percent. A tiny announcement on page 2 pointed out that the paper had taken the decision "reluctantly… due to significant increases in printing, production and distribution costs, including a sharp rise in fuel charges".

And how! When, two days later, some fuel companies hiked up prices at the pumps by "up to 5p a litre in 48 hours", the paper was quick to emblazon its front page with its opinion of them: "THE PETROL PROFITEERS".

**"BIG Brother? Hardly. The CCTV cameras don't work – and actually make crime even worse." Says who? The *Daily Mail* in a prominent op-ed piece last week.**

The article decried the "up to 75 percent of Britons [who], according to some polls, have a favourable attitude towards CCTV cameras".

How can people have been so misled? Perhaps by the newspaper which greeted the cameras with headlines such as "Spy cameras cut crime in city by third", not to mention saying in leader columns: "Libertarians may tut-tut about Big Brother. But the overwhelming majority of law-abiding citizens would be only too happy to be watched over by a camera with a memory for criminal faces."

The newspaper's name? The *Daily Mail.*

**HAVING earned the nickname "Our Sally" from his colleagues, the *Telegraph*'s pisspoor new sports columnist Jasper Gerard has duly made himself the Pride of Our Alley with a comment worthy of Ms Jockstrap herself.**

"They grumble that the club's owner Thaksin Shinawatra is 'overbearing' and even 'dictatorial'," he writes of Manchester City supporters. "And their point is?... Fans must realise they could not have players like Stilian Petrov if they were owned by a nice bloke from Salford with a chain of launderettes, rather than a Far Eastern millionaire."

Man City fans do indeed realise they can't have players like Stilian Petrov, not least because he plays for Aston Villa. They have a Martin Petrov, however.

*Coming soon:* Why didn't England's selectors choose Lewis Hamilton for the Lord's Test?

**"LULU: About to hit 60 and as lovely as ever," gushed the front page of the *Daily Express* on 28 April.**

"These pictures of Lulu make you wanna shout. At 59, the diminutive Scottish star looks amazing," noted a "news" story pegged to the fact the singer will enter her seventh decade in, er, November.

Why the brown-nosing? Surely not because *Express* proprietor Richard Desmond was trying to persuade Lulu to appear alongside his own, er, "supergroup", the RD Crusaders, at a series of charity gigs?

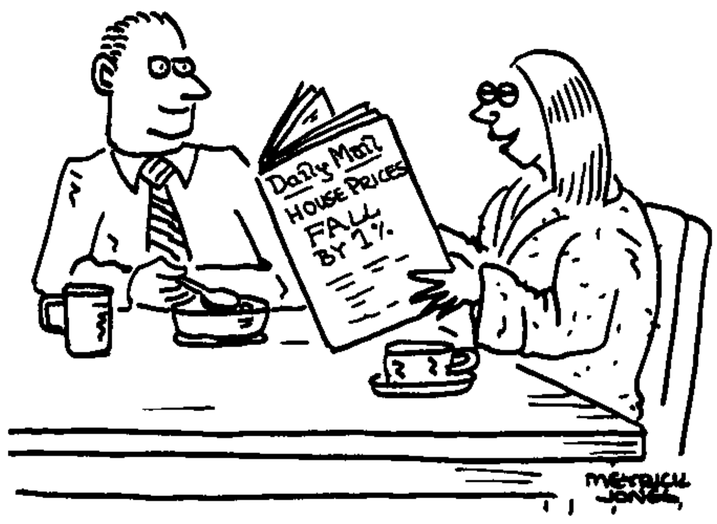
By a strange coincidence Lulu made her first appearance last week alongside what the *Sunday Express* called "a galaxy of stars including Jimmy Osmond" – though the paper could only find space for photographs of two – Lulu and Mark Ronson – accompanied in both cases by the sweaty and rather dishevelled Desmond himself.

**THE *Daily Telegraph* ran a surprisingly positive leader article about China on 2 May, arguing that it was misguided to be scared or censorious of Beijing.**

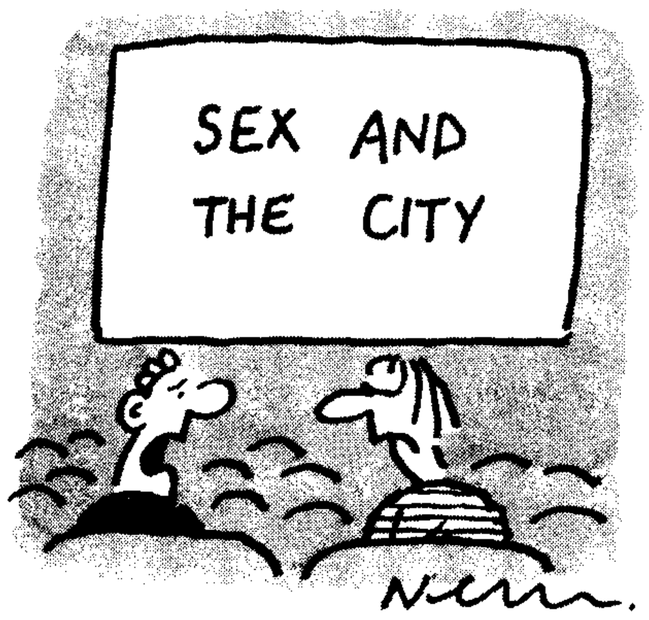
But why should the *Torygraph* be so kind about a communist gerontocracy? Could thirsty Will Lewis, the paper's embattled editor, possibly be trying to impress the pro-China Rupert Murdoch? If Lewis falls out of favour with the Barclay brothers who own the *Telegraph*, he may fancy his chances editing the *Sunday Times*.

**CONGRATULATIONS to the *Daily Telegraph*'s editorial team on its sensitive depiction of the humanitarian disaster in south-east Asia, especially the large and emotive picture "orphans of the Burma cyclone" that it ran over a large part of its front page on 9 May.**

Fewer congratulations to the *Daily Telegraph*'s advertising team, who decided the ideal candidate for the directly adjacent front-page spot was the musical *Gone with the Wind.*




*"I feel so silly. Only a week ago I was sitting right here, worrying about climate change"*




*"I've got a headache"*

**A YEAR has now passed since an Italian labour tribunal ordered the *Times* to pay €300,000 to its former Rome correspondent John Phillips for illegally dismissing him in 2004 (see *Eye* 1190). But the Dirty Digger's boxwallahs are still refusing to stump up.**

Phillips has now applied successfully to a high court judge in London to register the Italian judgment over here. This means he can enforce it by sending bailiffs into Wapping if the *Times* doesn't pay the sum ordered by the Rome tribunal for back pay, benefits and compensation.

The case could have important consequences for other hacks who work abroad for British newspapers under often precarious or dangerous conditions. Phillips had been with the paper since 1990, first as a Paris correspondent and then in Rome, and also risked his neck in the Croatian and Bosnian wars.

At the Italian tribunal hearings the newspaper insisted that Phillips was a pure freelance, rather than a "correspondent" with employment rights, and could therefore be told to sod off over the phone without any formal notice. Phillips exploded this by pointing out that the paper had flown him back to London for a conference of its European correspondents.

The *Times* is challenging the high court registration order on the grounds that it has lodged an appeal against the Rome tribunal's judgment and needn't pay up until that is heard. Not so. Under Italian law, labour-case rulings are enforceable immediately, irrespective of any appeal, to stop rogue employers evading court orders by exploiting the country's agonisingly slow appeals system.

Unless the Digger's lawyers can come up with something better, the bailiffs will be arriving at Fortress Wapping within weeks.

**CONGRATULATIONS to Prince William, who received his RAF pilot's wings last month in a ceremony conducted by the Air Chief Marshal, who happens to be his dad, Prince Charles.**

The young flight officer's exceptional talents ensured he was awarded the insignia after a mere 13 weeks' training as opposed to the several years it takes most pilots. But was it wise to allow his former wannabe-grandfather Mohamed Fayed to draw up the guest list?

## GRAUNIAD-WATCH: WHOOPS, THEY DID IT AGAIN

**THE *Guardian* threw one last roll of the dice in its desperate bid to stop Boris Johnson from becoming mayor of London by asking a posse of luvvies to "imagine what it would be like if this bigoted, lying, Old Etonian buffoon got his hands on our diverse and liberal capital".**

"Boris as mayor?" wailed Vivienne Westwood. "Unthinkable. It just exposes democracy as a sham, especially if people don't vote for Ken." Arabella Weir vowed to "go on hunger strike and throw myself in front of the next horse at Ascot if he wins… And then I'll move out of London."

Daffy *Grauniad* pundit Zoe Williams, who has impeccable anti-Etonian credentials as an old girl of Godolphin and Latymer School (fees: £4,490 a term), cited the 2004 *Spectator* editorial which described Liverpool as "a society that has become hooked on grief and likes to wallow in a sense of vicarious victimhood". She was supported by author Blake Morrison, who threatened to move to Australia if Boris won since "the contempt he once showed for the inhabitants of another British city, Liverpool, should rule him out of running this one".

If this disqualifies Boris from taking office, then by the same standard *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger should have been kicked out seven years ago, after publishing a column by Charlotte Raven suggesting that "Scousers' propensity to linger over every misfortune until another comes to replace it makes them uniquely suited to the demands of the [James] Bulger mourning marathon... Being the perennial victims of a pair of notorious murderers is a much easier route to the moral superiority that every Scouser sees as their birthright than the more irksome alternative – actually doing something good."

True, the Raven article wasn't *written* by Rusbridger or by Ian Katz, the editor of the section in which it appeared. But then Boris didn't actually write the famous *Spectator* editorial either. Rusbridger and Katz refused to disown the piece or apologise for publishing it even after the readers' editor announced that "the column should not have appeared".

Rubbisher was away in the week of the London mayoral election, leaving his eager lieutenants Georgina Henry and Kath Viner in charge. And what fun they had, filling page after page with screeching attacks on the "sociopath" Johnson. "A vote against this effete and frivolous Tory is a no-brainer," yelled Polly Toynbee. But some executives at the paper now wonder if this hysterical monstering might actually have contributed to his victory: there was a spate of letters and emails from readers who had intended to vote for Ken but switched to Boris in protest at the paper's "obnoxious" and "apocalyptic" coverage.

If so, it wouldn't be the first of the *Grauniad*'s electoral interventions to backfire spectacularly. In the autumn of 2004, as editor of *G2*, Ian Katz came up with the wizard wheeze of urging *Guardian* readers to write to individual voters in Clark County, Ohio, explaining to the ignorant hicks that Bush was a bad chap and they must vote for John Kerry instead. About 12,000 British *bien pensants* took up the challenge, including Lady Magnesia Freelove and Ken Loach.

The result? Ohio voters, including many Democrats, took umbrage at being told how to vote by "stupid, yellow-toothed pansies" across the ocean. In the 2000 election Bush had lost Clark County by 324 votes. In 2004, thanks to the *Guardian*'s efforts, a swing well above the national average gave Bush a 1,620 majority in the county – which in turn delivered Ohio and thus ensured his re-election. "What the hell will we do for an *encore*?" a disgruntled *Grauniad* hack muttered at the time. Now we know.

Ironically, the *Grauniad* hack most embarrassed by the anti-Boris barrage was Ian Katz, now editor of the Saturday edition, who tried to atone with a remarkably positive piece in his paper last weekend. "He has been vilified as a right-wing joker but a choreographed first week cast him as businesslike, serious – and a lot like Ken," it reported. "Johnson's opponents were cautiously impressed." The Saturday *Guardian* also carried a series of cheerful photos of Boris in action, leading the Dave Sparts at the *Grauniad* to regard Katz with even greater suspicion. As well they might: he is Boris's next-door neighbour in Islington!

## HUMBUG SPECIAL

**STILL reeling from London's decision to ignore its instruction not to vote for Boris Johnson, the *Guardian* last Friday devoted seven full pages to exploring a sad fact his victory supposedly demonstrated.**

"The Conservatives are just reflecting modern Britain – a nation that is now less meritocratic than in a generation… At a time when the political elite will not stop talking about 'meritocracy', their own ranks suggest that we are light years from even getting near it," it sighed liberally. "In 2005, only 17 percent of members of the House of Lords came from state comprehensives, which account for 90 percent of all British schools."

A cut-out-and-keep guide to "the education of cabinet ministers over the past 70 years" and definitive answers to the question "which of today's top politicians are privately educated?" were also provided for readers – the latter revealing, in the case of the current cabinet, a staggering eight.

Missing, however, was an equally revealing list: "Which senior editorial staff at the *Guardian* are privately educated?" That would include:

Editor Alan Rusbridger (Cranleigh); political editor Patrick Wintour (Westminster); leader writer Madeleine Bunting (Queen Mary's, Yorkshire); policy editor Jonathan Freedland (University College School); columnist Polly Toynbee (Badminton); executive editor Ian Katz (University College School); security affairs editor Richard Norton Taylor (King's School, Canterbury); arts editor-in-chief Clare Margetson (Marlborough College); literary editor Clare Armitstead (Bedales); public services editor David Brindle (Bablake); city editor Julia Finch (King's High, Warwick); environment editor John Vidal (St Bees); fashion editor Jess Cartner-Morley (City of London School for Girls); G3 editor Janine Gibson (Walthamstow Hall); northern editor Martin Wainwright (Shrewsbury); and industrial editor David Gow (St Peter's, York).

## THE ZZZ-LIST

*Truly pathetic non-stories about celebrities from the national press…*

"Arriving at the decorative antiques and textile fair in Battersea Park yesterday, Sweeney Todd actress Helena Bonham Carter and her film director partner Tim Burton took one look at the endless queue – and promptly joined it. 'They didn't queue jump and had to wait at least half an hour to get in,' says a fellow fair-goer."

*– Richard Kay, Daily Mail, 23 April*

*"Personally I think horoscopes are a load of rubbish, but I would say that – I'm a Virgo"*

**ENVIRONMENT, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary *Hilary* Benn tried hard to show that his appointment of former Labour minister Chris Smith to head the Environment Agency was the best-man-for-the-job rather than looking-after-our-chums.**

Alas, it was hard to take his claims about Smith's "strong leadership experience" seriously. When he was culture secretary Smith stood around vaguely while the disaster of the Millennium Dome unfolded. The Environment Agency, meanwhile, is wrestling with such serious issues as flooding, industrial pollution and animal disease.

Smith's experience with arts administration doesn't look an obvious fit, and since leaving government he has done nothing impressive. He cashed in on his former job by becoming a consultant to Disney – literally becoming a Mickey Mouse politician – but this job didn't last.

He still holds a few vaguely pretentious jobs. But it is hard to see how his non-executive directorship at arty think tank Zamyn – "a lab that inquires into the cultural effects of globalisation" by "reconceptualising the links between culture and economic welfare" will help Smith wrestle with potential environmental disasters.

Smith's got his most substantial job as chairman of the Advertising Standards Authority because advertisers wanted a political insider to represent the industry to government, not a tough regulator.

**ACCUSED by former parliamentary colleagues of the late Gwyneth Dunwoody of "discourtesy and insensitivity" and "unseemly haste" in moving the writ for a by-election in her Crewe and Nantwich constituency before her funeral had even been held, leader of the House Harriet Harman was outraged.**

"I shall read to the House a statement from the family in respect of the late Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody," she squeaked. "They said: 'We fully support the decision to begin the process of electing a new MP for Crewe and Nantwich. Our mother proudly represented this constituency for 34 years, and would not want to see local people go without an MP… She would want that job of work to continue, as quickly as possible'."

A clue as to why they might have been so keen was provided just four days later, when the Labour candidate for Crewe and Nantwich was selected: Tamsin Dunwoody, 49-year-old daughter of the former MP.

**ONLY confusion and chaos spared the government another embarrassment in the Commons last week over its hotchpotch of a criminal justice and immigration bill.**

MPs were due to vote on a last-minute peers' amendment to the bill, which would have made pay review recommendations for police and prison officers binding on ministers. With 30 Labour backbenchers indicating they would support the amendment, the government risked defeat.

However, desperate to ensure the bill received royal assent before midnight last Thursday (when existing agreements with prison officers over strike action ended), the government raced through the final changes, causing confusion all round. So a debate on data protection was not pressed to a vote, but was instead followed immediately by a vote on police and prison pay – without a debate.

Thus it was the Labour "rebels" ended up voting with the government by mistake. Jeremy Corbyn realised the error and ended up negating his vote by walking into both lobbies. Others were furious, blaming the government for the confusion. Hence the government secured a majority of 56 when it might have faced a four-vote defeat, and the bill duly received its final approval, outlawing strike action by angry prison officers struggling to cope with our overflowing jails.

**THE Department for Transport has proposed a raft of changes to the driving test, including requiring that learners acquire a "test readiness certificate" before taking the test and a much more complicated practical test that will assess candidates' ability to navigate.**

One area that won't be sorted out, however, is the theory test, some areas of which are downright peculiar. Questions for the theory test can be set not only by expert staff at the Driving Standards Agency but also proposed by any MPs or councillors, whatever their agenda. One question in the bike and car theory test is as follows:

"Trams or Light Rapid Transit (LRT) systems are environmentally friendly because?

a) They use diesel power

b) They use electric power

c) They use quieter roads

d) They do not operate during rush hour."

The correct answer is b – at least, according to the test. This is apparently true even if the electricity used to power the tram is generated in a coal-powered power station, such as the proposed new Kingsnorth unit in Kent, the subject of much environmental controversy.

## CALLED TO ORDURE

**THE Brown government had a great opportunity to go green the other day and give a hand up to solar power. Did it seize the opportunity? Nah. Who cares about little-guy energy producers when there are corporate power generators to assuage?**

Veteran lefty Alan Simpson (Lab, Nottingham S) wanted the government to think about a "feed-in tariff" for people who generate their own electricity from solar, wind and other sources. "Feed-in tariff" is jargon but it means homeowners would know how much they'd be paid for the eco-friendly energy they fed into the national grid. A generous rate could cut Britain's dependence on overseas fuel and reduce the grovelling we do to gas-rich Russia. It would also help us meet the climate change targets that Gordon Brown professes to cherish.

Simpson proposed an amendment to the energy bill going through the Commons. His measure didn't demand a feed-in tariff instantly but would have forced the government to come back in a year's time with a figure.

Simpson's backers ranged from Greenpeace to the National Farmers Union. He also had celebrity backing from Lily Allen, though this was of limited use as creakier MPs hadn't a clue who she was (a pop singer, m'lud). Simpson's idea was so cross-party it was supported not only by right-wing Tory John Redwood but also by Respect's George Galloway – although suave George, naturally, couldn't be tossed to turn up to vote.

The first part of the energy bill's debate had seen much harrumphing about how the nuclear power industry needed a sure idea of future financial planning. When it came to discussing solar power, however, energy minister Malcolm Wicks was more worried about protecting liberalisation of the market. An oddly powerless figure, Wicks – not what you expect from an energy minister at all. Full of hot air, though.

Simpson described how feeble Britain is at renewable power. We have about 80,000 solar energy units, while Germany has more than a million such units and has created 250,000 jobs in the renewable energy sector.

Fifty countries have feed-in tariffs but not Britain. Colin Challen, the Labour MP who is sacrificing his Morley seat to make way for Ed Balls at the next general election – in exchange for a juicy international climate change job – said that all those new German jobs were a brilliant wheeze because they had been created without breaking EU state aid rules.

Wicks flapped his hands, cleared his throat and stammered. He looked even queasier when Jeremy Corbyn (Lab, Islington) recalled that the big energy companies in Germany tried to screw up the solar lobby there. They were seen off, happily. Simpson said that here in Britain "we have found ourselves too deeply enmeshed in the large-scale corporate interests of the big energy companies".

Various MPs piled into the debate behind Simpson, among them former home secretary Charles Clarke, Dai Havard and Des Turner, who expressed "a grave feeling of personal disappointment" at the government's stance.

Wicks is regarded as a civil jobsworth but he was starting to bluster. "I refuse to believe that somehow things are altogether better in another country than they are in the UK," he cried. "I refuse to accept the simple comparison that suggests Germany is in a better place than we are."

Numerous MPs: "It is!"

Desperate to find some argument against feed-in tariffs, Wicks fretted that it would be hard to know where to differentiate between citizens producing small amounts of green power and the big electricity generators. Challen popped up with an answer, but Wicks chose to ignore his suggestion.

Despite a healthy Labour rebellion, Simpson's amendment was defeated. Meanwhile, the Tories are delighted as the government's green credentials crumble like the Dorset coast.

*'Gavel Basher'*

## OILY CHARACTER

**ALAN DUNCAN, the shadow secretary for business, enterprise and regulatory reform, is showing a lot of enterprise in his continuing relationship with the oil industry.**

He first earned his stripes selling oil for ex-fugitive trader Marc Rich in the 1980s before setting up his own oil advisory firm, Harcourt Consultants, which he still owns. Now the Conservative MP for Rutland & Melton has a part-time job as non-executive director of Arawak Energy, a Jersey-registered firm which produces oil in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia and is preparing for a listing on the London Stock Exchange.

The link between Arawak and Duncan is not hard to find. For Arawak's largest shareholder is the Swiss oil trader Vitol, which employed Duncan as a consultant in the early 1990s to help it open up markets in Pakistan when Duncan's old friend from Oxford, the late Benazir Bhutto, was running the country. Duncan is a personal friend of Vitol's English chief executive Ian Taylor and has described the outfit as a "well-respected" oil trading company.

Vitol, which provides Arawak with an office in its plush headquarters off Victoria Street, is not as squeaky clean as Duncan may have once believed. In late 2007, the company pleaded guilty in front of New York district attorney Robert Morgenthau to "larceny in the first degree" for paying $13m in kickbacks to the former Iraqi regime during the UN-administered oil-for-food programme. Vitol agreed to pay the $13m back to an Iraqi government fund and has shelled out an additional $4.5m for the benefit of New York.

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

**10** Poorest percentage of UK society who David Cameron claims Conservatives now "stand up for"

**10** Number of shadow ministers under David Cameron who were educated at Eton

## EDUCASHUN NEWZ

**TEACHERS dubbed plans to force schools to record teenage pregnancy, drug use and obesity as "madness" last week, but the proposal from the Department for Children, Schools and Families raises another question: who exactly will monitor these health issues?**

The government is a very, very long way from fulfilling its promise that by 2010 every secondary school would have a school nurse, who would also support a cluster of nearby primary schools. At present there are 3,300 secondary schools in England… and just 893 school nurses.

Teachers' leaders have already objected to the prospect of yet more time-consuming paperwork and say, rightly, that information on teenagers' health is not always available to schools anyway. In addition, teaching staff don't have the expertise to deal with health questions, and nor should youngsters be expected to talk about them with non-health professionals. Even more fundamentally, however, what's the point of keeping statistical records of problems if there's no one in school trained to improve the situation?

**CAN ETS manage to top bungling Edexcel for exam-marking cock-ups?**

As children sat down to their key stage two and three tests this week, would-be markers discovered that, due to a computer error, everyone who took the "standardisation test" on 11 May to qualify to mark English papers was told they had failed. Other problems reported so far on online forums include people being sent contracts for the wrong subjects and not being told where and when their training is to take place.

ETS took over the contract this year from Edexhell, which managed to deliver papers late, lose papers altogether and mess up grading (*Eyes passim*). It doesn't bode well for their replacements so far.

*"What did you learn at school, breakfast club and after-school club today?"*

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

**"The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith is making a statement on cannabis."**

*– Caption on BBC Parliament's Commons coverage, 7 May.*

## LONDON CALLING

**PERHAPS former *Sunday Telegraph* editor Patience Wheatcroft, appointed by new London mayor Boris Johnson to investigate allegations of corruption and incompetence at London Development Agency-funded organisations during the reign of his predecessor, should take a look at an outfit called Minority Matters, which received millions and collapsed leaving a trail of unpaid taxes.**

The east London-based Minority Matters Foundation began receiving money from the LDA in 2000 to assist yoof from efnic minorities into work with the help of a sister profit-making firm, Minority Matters Recruitment Ltd. Former directors include Annmarie Dixon-Barrow and Joel O'Loughlin.

The foundation's audited accounts record that it received £1.81m from the LDA over a five-year period. But this is at odds with the LDA's own muddled records. In December 2007 the LDA told the London Assembly that it had paid MM just £480,000 – a discrepancy of more than £1.3m. The LDA has since said the figure was actually £2,946,211 – a million out the other way – comprising £1,009,356 to the foundation and £1,936,855 to Minority Matters Recruitment.

Dixon-Barrow, the chief executive of both firms, paid herself a six-figure salary. She was disqualified from being a company director in September 2007 after HM Revenue and Customs discovered that MM owed £641,959 in tax and national insurance.

Ironic, then, that in 2003 she appeared before the London Assembly scrutiny committee and criticised agencies such as the LDA for failing to "look behind the scenes" of organisations they are funding. Indeed.

**SO WHAT now for ex-mayor Ken? King Newt has always been something of a political chameleon, veering from hard left to New Labour via all shades in between as it has suited him.**

Perhaps, having seen the way the political wind is blowing, he may yet return to his political roots? Ken became a Labour councillor in Lambeth in 1971, having joined the party in 1969, at the age of 23. So what was he up to before that? According to Sir Christopher Gent, one-time chairman of the Young Conservatives, Ken was for a period the YCs' executive member for Streatham in the 60s – a biographical detail about which he has been curiously silent! Anyone for table tennis?

**AS Labour nosedives in the polls, various Establishment greasers are floating towards the Tory party.**

Advertising millionaire Sir Martin Sorrell quickly moved on from his alliance with Livingstone to offer his services to Boris. And so did New Labour architect Lord Rogers, perhaps horrified by the thought of all those skyscraper commissions drying up.

Typical of the drifting sympathies is Inayat Bunglawala, "media secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain". Shortly before the London mayoral election, he joined voices in the *Guardian* attacking Boris. "I'm supposed to be non-partisan but I think a win for Boris would cause great concern in the Muslim community," he asserted.

Now that Boris is mayor and has power over ethnic minority funds, Bungler-wallah and his friends are desperately trying to repair relations. In a press release, the self-styled Muslim Council of Britain "welcomed" the new mayor to his job.

**IT DIDN'T take long for Boris's first big appointment to lose its lustre.**

Newspapers dubbed Ray Lewis, Boris's deputy mayor for young people, a "straight-talking former prison governor", with the *Sunday Times* describing how he "became the governor of Woodhill prison, a young offenders; institute," in 2000.

Alas, the *actual* governor of Woodhill from 2000-03 was one Bob Mullen, a man with more than 20 years' experience in the prison service. Lewis joined in 2000 through the fast-track process and after three months' training started work at the bottom management grade, known as "governor grade 5". Technically he has been *a* prison governor – but hardly what the public understands by the term.

● More Boris & Ken – Rotten Boroughs, 14

## MULTI-TASKING

**REVELATIONS in the last *Eye* of super-human multi-tasking by the man at the top of Britain's nuclear power industry, British Energy's £250,000-a-year chairman Sir Adrian Montague, have alarmed investors in the FTSE 100 company where he is simultaneously the supposedly full-time executive chairman, Friends Provident plc.**

One reader points out that the insurance company's rules only "permit executive directors to accept up to two external appointments. However, all fees received in respect of external appointments are paid to the Company not to the individual director". So is he giving up a few jobs and handing over the cash from the others? No: as he's only executive chairman for a few months that would be "unreasonable", said a spokesman.

Back in 2004 Montague told a committee of MPs that he devoted "about two or two and a half" days a week to the partly taxpayer-owned British Energy. With BE now up for sale, the current commitment can hardly be any less. Then there are his two further chairmanships and four other directorships, all of which leaves little time to chair and run a FTSE 100 outfit that's going through its own sticky patch.

Normally the chairman would be expected to make sure the chief executive has his eye fully on the ball; but as Montague has both roles at Friends Provident, the task falls to the deputy chairman. By a remarkable coincidence this happens to be perhaps the only person in corporate Britain who can out-multi-task Montague: the *Eye's* old favourite… Lady Barbara Judge!

## LATEST APPOINTMENTS

**SWIFT rewards for the government's former chief scientific adviser, Professor Sir David King, who retired in December shortly after stepping beyond his remit to weigh in on the side of stepping up nuclear power generation. The prof's apparently authoritative endorsement duly bolstered the government's rigged case for more nuclear build.**

Last month Sir David became a consultant on an undisclosed salary for UBS bank, which despite its $40bn credit crunch losses can still afford a man with the right contacts book.

UBS also, as it happens, has a burgeoning interest in the nuclear business and advises Business Secretary John Hutton on "commercial and financial aspects of the strong and growing interest in nuclear" and on the sale of partly taxpayer-owned British Energy. Its long-time investment banking clients include German energy giant RWE, which is eagerly eyeing up the British nuclear scene.

**CONGRATULATIONS to the Prison Service on the appointment of its new "director of organisational development", Martin Beechcroft.**

He takes up his new post this month direct from… BAA, where according to the in-house quarterly journal, *Our People*, he played "a leading role in the new Terminal Five construction at Heathrow". Just the man to deal with prisons that are full to bursting!

## LIBEL NEWS

**"FOR Tesco to be looked upon with a little less suspicion," an *Independent* business hack wrote a month ago, "it needs to shed some of its paranoia."**

Fat chance. Tesco boss Sir Terry Leahy once told an interviewer that paranoia was the secret of his success: now it's also the reason for the swelling international condemnation of his company.

As the *Eye* has reported, Tesco is suing two Thai journalists and a businessman for multi-million pound damages because they dared express misgivings about the speed and aggressiveness of its expansion in their country. One of the defendants, Jit Siratranont, also faces a charge of "criminal defamation" which carries a two-year prison sentence.

Although Tesco's corporate responsibility policy boasts of its commitment to "upholding basic human rights and [supporting] in full the United Nations universal declaration of human rights", it seems quite happy to use a law which has been denounced by international human rights bodies as archaic and oppressive.

Two weeks ago Leahy received a letter from a posse of leading writers – including Nick Hornby, Deborah Moggach, Marina Lewycka and the president of English PEN – protesting at the firm's "grossly disproportionate" reaction. On the same day a thunderous *Times* editorial accused Tesco of "trying to silence critics using tactics that are more familiar to dictatorships than to corporations... Corporate HQ has either lost control of the Thai operation, or is off its trolley".

Probably the latter. For Tesco is also pressing on hysterically with legal actions against the *Guardian* over its coverage of the company's offshore tax-avoidance schemes. On 3 May the paper ran a two-page spread "setting the record straight", admitting two mistakes in its original piece: it had misunderstood which tax Tesco was avoiding, and overestimated the amount saved by the scheme.

"We are happy to withdraw both assertions and apologise," an accompanying editorial announced.

*"And like a fool I made a complaint against Tesco"*

However, it added, "if Tesco is prepared to use tax avoidance schemes then how can it argue that it is defamatory to report and comment on them – even allowing for errors in describing the method and quantum of avoidance?... If, on the other hand, Tesco does think it is reputationally damaging to be depicted as a large-scale avoider of democratically ordained taxes then it must surely be prepared to explain in some detail why it has gone to such lengths to avoid certain taxes. We repeat our offer to Sir Terry Leahy, first made on 4 March, of prominent space in which to explain his company's views on tax and the avoidance of tax."

Leahy is still declining to take up the offer. He has got the idea into his head that Alan Rusbridger was personally "wilful" in running the story and now wants to punish the editor, as he punishes all his enemies. Not content with a libel suit, he is also suing Rusbridger for "malicious falsehood".

But what of Sir Terry's own grasp on the truth? Two weeks ago he wrote to the *Times* insisting that Tesco had tried "time and time again" to engage with the three Thai critics, and that the legal fusillade against them could have been avoided if only they'd been prepared to set the record straight. The trio immediately and indignantly denied that Tesco had asked them for a retraction; in fact, as the company was later forced to admit, it had never contacted them at all.

Since he's been caught telling porkies, no doubt Sir Terry will now sue himself.

## PICTURE POSTCARDS

An occasional feature

**WITH the Israeli blockade of Gaza now keeping fuel out as well as food and other essentials, the UN Relief and Works Agency has had to turn to a traditional mode of transport after its aid vehicles ran out of fuel...**

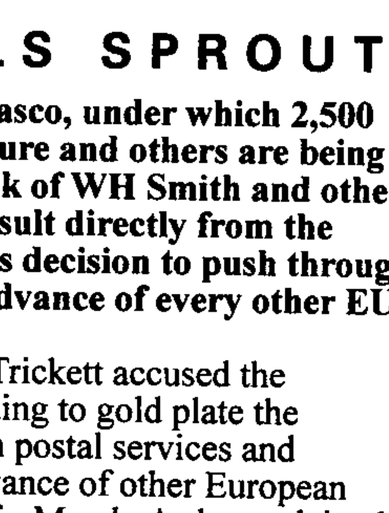
*Submissions welcome.*

## BRUSSELS SPROUTS

**THE post office fiasco, under which 2,500 post offices face closure and others are being shunted into the back of WH Smith and other stores, appears to result directly from the British government's decision to push through an EU directive in advance of every other EU country.**

Labour MP John Trickett accused the government of "deciding to gold plate the European directive on postal services and introduce them in advance of other European member states" back in March. As he explained: "The Bolkestein Directive [*issued by Frits Bolkestein, the Dutch free-marketeer and former EU commissioner*] introduced internal market provisions... without first ring fencing public services." Trickett pointed out that although the directive was passed by the Council of Ministers with the European Commission, "the House did not have the opportunity to debate them and to ensure that the will of the people was properly heard".

**EU-phemisms**




**He's not Tony Blair**

Chairman of the EU scrutiny committee Michael Connarty and MP David Drew agreed that the UK post office once made a "massive profit" but bits of the service had now been cherry picked by the Dutch and German owned postal giants TNT and DHL, while Holland and Germany themselves had decided to delay the introduction of the directive until 2013.

Mr Drew, who was fighting the 2,500 post office closures, including nine in his Stroud constituency, described the decision to follow up the EU directive in the UK's 2000 Postal Services Act as "an unmitigated disaster". And as Mr Trickett complained: "Public services ought to be protected by parliamentary debate before and not after ministers go and agree to changes that could change the social fabric of our country." Anyone trying to find where their local post office has now disappeared to may well agree.

## NEWS FROM THE SANDPIT

**THANKS to the internet and the British Forces Broadcasting Service, it's easy for the lads to keep tabs on what the press are reporting back home.**

So when the London *Evening Standard* splashed last week with "Police Kill Iraq Veteran", following the shooting of barrister Rodney Saunders in Chelsea, a lot of squaddies took an interest. A flurry of rumours about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and "another ex-squaddie gone mental" did the rounds in Basra and were reported back in London.

But the rumours weren't true. Rodney Saunders had only been a member of the TA's Honourable Artillery Company for three years up until 2002 and had resigned his post after his father told him: "You want to get out of there or Tony Blair will ship you off to Iraq."

HAC squadron troopers have been deployed in Bosnatraz, Iraq and the 'Stan, but Saunders never saw active service. Some of the lads dislike the cliché of crazed ex-squaddies going on the rampage; largely because it barely ever happens. PTSD is responsible for many deaths, but almost all of them are quiet suicides, too dull to make a tabloid front page lead.

One charity, Combat Stress is already helping 1,000 veterans with mental health problems. None of them has rampaged anywhere. Instead they reach for the bottle, or just sit and cry after endless "flashbacks" and nightmares ruin their family life. They end up homeless, clinically depressed and unable to cope.

The NHS, where those unlucky enough to be able to get help from a charity end up, is pisspoor at handling PTSD. Forced to attend a group session with civilian sufferers, one soldier attempted to tell his story: he had shot a child while returning fire in Iraq. He got a phone call from the group's therapists asking him not to come back because "I was frightening the other group members" – frightened perhaps by the negative stereotype so relished by the press and Hollywood.

*'Square Basher'*

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

**28 days** Time terror suspects can be kept in custody without charge, despite best efforts of government

**29 days** Time Pete Doherty can be kept in jail, despite a string of convictions for drug and driving offences

# MEDICINE BALLS

## Safety first

**"I WANT to help use Elaine's death to help bring cultural change in healthcare. I want to tell our two young children when they have grown up that Mummy's death has made a big difference." So says inspirational pilot Martin Bromiley on the website (*www.chfg.org*) for his charity founded to recognize the role of human factors in the prevention of medical error.**

Elaine Bromiley was 37 and healthy when she was booked in for non-emergency sinus surgery under general anaesthesia in a private unit adjacent to an NHS hospital. Her consultant anaesthetist had 16 years of experience, the ENT surgeon had 30 years under his belt and three of the four nurses in the theatre were also very experienced. The theatre was very well equipped, there were no competing pressures of emergencies elsewhere but there was another senior anaesthetist operating in the theatre next door. As Bromiley observed: "This was a dream scenario for safety. A senior, competent surgical team working in state of the art surroundings."

Anaesthesia was induced at 8.35am but it was not possible to insert the laryngeal mask airway. By 8.37, oxygenation began to deteriorate and she looked cyanosed (ie she was turning blue through lack of oxygen). Her oxygen saturation dropped to 75 percent (anything below 90 percent is significantly low). By 8.39 oxygen saturation had fallen to 40 percent but attempts to ventilate the lungs with 100 percent oxygen using a facemask and oral airway proved extremely difficult. The saturation level remained perilously low but the anaesthetist, who was joined by a consultant colleague, was unable to perform a tracheal intubation, a complex procedure that entails inserting a flexible plastic tube into the trachea.

By 8.45, airway access had still not been achieved and the situation was termed "can't intubate, can't ventilate", a recognized emergency for which guidelines (requiring an emergency tracheotomy) were well recognized. One nurse, on her own initiative, fetched the tracheotomy tray. Another, recognizing the severity of the situation, went to secure a bed on the intensive care unit. However, the three consultants decided to keep attempting intubation, unsuccessfully, and at 9.10 abandoned the procedure hoping Mrs Bromiley would wake up. Her oxygen saturation had remained at less than 40 percent for 20 minutes and she never recovered consciousness, dying 13 days later.

Martin Bromiley was initially told that his wife's death was extreme bad luck and that nothing more could have been done. As a pilot, he was used to analyzing critical incidents in a no-blame culture and wanted to hear the results of the inquiry. He was told: "There won't be an inquiry. Not unless you complain or sue." Bromiley insisted on an independent expert review which concluded that, given the skill mix of the clinicians, it should have been very easy to follow the established emergency protocol and perform a tracheotomy. So why didn't it happen?

Errors in medicine happen not just because of lack of skill or knowledge but for behavioural reasons. Ask doctors what they should do in an exam, and they trot out the guidelines. Put them in the extremely stressful situation of a very rare, rapidly deteriorating potential catastrophe and even the most senior clinicians can lose the plot.

The role of these human factors in decision making is well recognized in aviation and it is to his enormous credit that Mr Bromiley has assembled leaders in the field to work out how such disasters can be prevented in healthcare. Simulating emergency situations, pre-briefing and debriefing before surgery, introducing and valuing members of the team and creating a culture where the most junior member of staff (or even the patient) can raise concerns or call for a time out sound obvious, but don't happen routinely in the NHS. And the drive for productivity and cost containment under Labour is leading to yet more corner cutting. For the sake of Elaine Bromley, and the thousands of others who die each year from avoidable error, Lord Darzi's review must rebuild the NHS around safety.

*M.D.*

# SIGNAL FAILURES

## Councils of despair

**LABOUR's drubbing in council elections will make no difference on the railways, where central government has unprecedented control.**

In mainland Europe influence over local trains has been devolved, and many French cities have built tram systems under their own local transport policies. England is supposed to be the same, according to the Department for Transport (Daft). When the *Times* pointed out that the road network was growing 15 times faster than rail, a Daft spokesman said: "Local authorities can fund line reopenings if they believe this is the best way of addressing local transport issues."

Er, up to a point. Many councils do believe reopened or new lines are the best way to address local transport issues, but central government has strangled so many rail schemes that drawing up new ones is a waste of time and money.

A local-authority scheme to reopen the Oxford-Cambridge line hit a Whitehall brick wall, despite the route's potential to relieve congestion in greater London (*Eye* 1165). Local government took tram schemes for Leeds, Liverpool and Portsmouth through drawn-out planning stages before central government blocked them because of cost increases (while road schemes proceeded despite rocketing costs). And six years ago councillors approved extensions to Nottingham's tram system only to see the scheme mired in government assessment and planning procedures. In France, Lyon's tram system was planned and built in four years.

In 2005 central government legislated to stop transport authorities in the main cities of the north and Midlands having a formal say in new rail franchises. They became so frustrated by rail-industry bureaucracy and government apathy they abandoned their programmes of building new stations (which had survived Margaret Thatcher's tenure but not Tony Blair's). Despite big increases in rail passengers around Leeds and other cities, the Daft threw out proposals for the Northern Rail franchise to introduce new commuter trains.

Franchise specifications are drawn up in Whitehall by people who either don't understand or don't care about local travel patterns. For example, there were more than 9,000 responses (mostly protests) to the "greater western" specification, which rode roughshod over the work of south-west councils to increase rail travel. Some branch lines temporarily lost their entire train service as First Great Western's new franchise floundered. Ivybridge station, Devon, was built by local councils in 1994 when they could still fund rail schemes; Daft civil servants slashed Ivybridge services after passengers using the station increased 105 percent in four years.

When monolithic British Rail ran the network, local authorities had constructive relationships with regional rail managers, who took many decisions locally. Now there's a rail franchise for each region; managers are forever meeting "stakeholders" but have no authority to make significant changes without approval from the Daft in London.

While accepting that the Labour government abhors new railways outside London, Scotland and Wales, some local authorities want to safeguard disused routes in case a different government might let them implement rail schemes. The Peak District national park authority fears future rail use of the Woodhead tunnel, one of few in Britain big enough to accommodate lorries on rail wagons, will be prejudiced by National Grid's plan to put power cables in the tunnel.

The government refuses to intervene because reopening the former Sheffield-Manchester electric railway doesn't feature in the Daft's 20-year regional plan. Of course it doesn't when government transport planning is based on the prediction that oil will cost $20 to $50 a barrel (*Eye* 1198) from 2010 to 2020 (it hit $122 last week and could climb to $200). And not when admitting that the railway might reopen would undermine the government's bungled attempts at a public inquiry to justify a proposed three-mile bypass road, near the Woodhead tunnel, estimated in 2007 to cost £184m – more than double the £90m price tag in 2004.

*'Dr B Ching'*

# ECO WORRIER

## Lessons in Greenwash

**THE PR industry is finally facing up to the fact that for years it has been asleep as its clients embrace ever more environmentally conscious business practices and expect their spin-doctors to know how to promote them without landing them in the mire.**

Alas, PR firms often get the sustainability agenda disastrously wrong (*see Eyes passim*). But fearful PR executives need not panic, for on 9 July *PR Week* is hosting a "must-attend" conference at the Dorchester Hotel on "Green PR". Its bold theme is "Green Advocacy, Not Greenwash", and the event is catchily marketed as promising to teach attendees about "Utilising Effective & Engaging Green Messaging To Communicate Your Environmental Credentials To Internal & External Audiences".

For a little over £700, delegates can hear from a range of impressive experts. Topics include "how to position green as a vital part of your corporate communications to ensure authentic and effective PR initiatives". Plus an unmissable session on "Using your environmental credentials to boost your reputation whilst avoiding accusations of greenwash".

Presumably the latter is to help delegates avoid the sort of damaging backlash suffered by companies like Virgin Atlantic, whose recent test flight of a plane between Heathrow and Amsterdam powered partly by biofuel was dismissed as "high altitude greenwash" by environmental campaigners who pointed out that Virgin had been an active lobbyist for a third runway at Heathrow. Or oil giant Shell, which has long been accused of running misleading adverts across Europe depicting the outline of an oil refinery emitting flowers rather than smoke.

Conference attendees would certainly want to avoid the kind of greenwash claims levelled against EDF Energy, which talks about its seriousness on addressing climate change while regularly appearing at the bottom of respected league tables that rank energy providers on whether their actions on green issues match their words.

How much value delegates to the *PR Week* conference will get for their £700 is debatable. Three of the "star" speakers touted to appear are none other than the brilliant communications directors of… Virgin Atlantic, Shell and EDF Energy!

# FTVE

**Wild China**
**Russia: A Journey with Jonathan Dimbleby**
**(both BBC2)**

**TIMING is always important in broadcasting. With China daily in the news for oppressing Tibet and hosting the 2008 Olympics – and the theoretically democratic leader of Russia having just installed a puppet as his successor – could there be a better moment for major documentary series travelling across the two nations to be screened on BBC2?**

Well, unfortunately, yes; because, in a decision astonishing even by the modern standards of ostrich politics and desperate populism in factual TV, **Wild China** completely avoids any contemporary reportage, instead making use of its much-advertised "first ever western co-production with China's national state broadcaster" to secure a sub-Attenborough wildlife show about flora, fauna and landscape in the People's Republic.

Meanwhile the survey of the former Soviet empire, while allowing itself one short conversation about democracy at a party in St Petersburg, otherwise concentrates on the personal feelings and midlife crisis of its presenter.

Presumably, if these two series take off, BBC2 will commission *The Cuisine of Iraq with Delia Smith* and *The Plants and Flowers of Burma* – except there is very little risk of the series taking off, because whatever hasn't been ruined in production has been wrecked in the scheduling.

Even though we know that the world "wild" has a precise zoological and botanical meaning, the viewer soon wonders if the network was having a laugh when it allowed the series that isn't about Tibet and the Olympics to be called *Wild China*. Because, really, this is as tame as telly gets.

A voiceover so dull and slow that you fear the actor may snooze off in the booth begins with an acknowledgement that "we all know China has vast social and environmental problems". However, presumably to the considerable pleasure of the Chinese state broadcasting system, a decision has been taken to ignore these in favour of "the relationship of the people of China to the remarkable landscape in which they live".

This doesn't necessarily rule out politics because many Chinese people have related to their landscape by being exiled, persecuted and then buried in it; but, as we feared, it means we get a solemn nature documentary in the style of those National Geographic films that used to be shown in schools on big TVs with wheels on 30 years ago.

The photography is often dazzling – water buffalo pull ploughs through the terraced rice paddies of the flood plains of the Yangtze river – but the commentary is dour and humourless, filled with off-the-peg phrases such as "the Chinese pond heron is a pitiless predator" and "the cave walls are covered in guano".

The ceiling fans at Television Centre will also be covered in guano if the Chinese regime lives up to expectations during the Beijing Olympics. Perhaps this sickly, sycophantic tribute to the nation's natural beauty can be played when the butchers of Tiananmen Square black-out the Olympic feed to prevent Tibet protests from being seen, or when the marathon is cancelled because of pollution.

Poor old Dimbers Minor has been rewarded for ignoring all that boring old stuff about Russian gangsters and the *de facto* dictatorship of Putin by being dispatched to television Siberia. **Russia: A Journey with Jonathan Dimbleby** has been given the gulag slot of 10pm on Sunday, when almost all the workers are early to bed in order to meet Brownite productivity targets in the coming week. The series was also scarcely publicised on TV, leaving the host panting round radio studios trying to drum up interest.

The series seems to have fallen between two TV eras. A couple of years ago, when it was commissioned, controllers were desperate for high-end docs to show the government that the BBC deserved the licence fee, although the preferred Dimbleby would have been David rather than Jonathan, the latter being associated more with radio and ITV than BBC TV. But, in the time the logistically tricky series has taken to get made, the medium has moved on. Travelogues are now fronted by comedians and reality TV stars. *Paul Merton's Russia*, maybe, *Alan Sugar's Russia*, perhaps – but not Jonty D's.

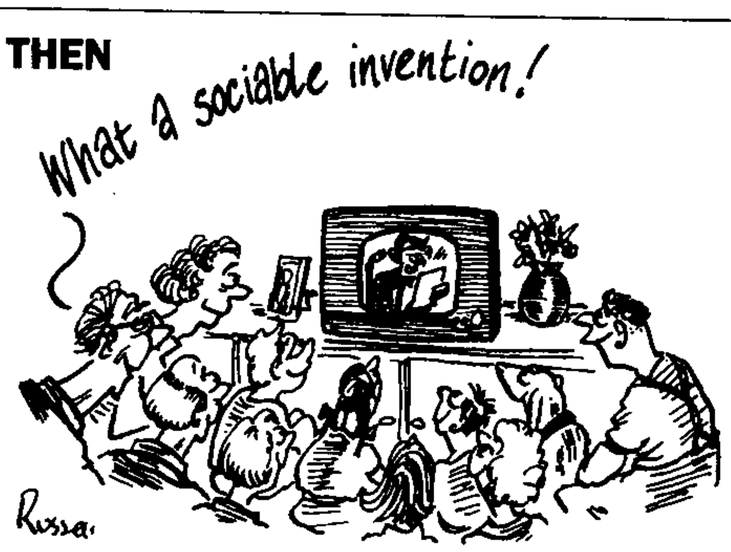
The other problem is that the presenter visibly looks as if he doesn't much want to be there. Grey and exhausted, he mooches round reading Dostoevsky and spouting travel-writer boiler-plate about "a journey in and out of several different worlds" and "this is a country of extremes".

The reason for this ennui, Dimbleby has revealed in the tie-in book and related newspaper articles, is that he was clinically depressed during filming, following the death of his mistress and the subsequent collapse of his marriage. But these problems are only alluded to in the opening episode, when Dimbers heads to a Russian bath house that promises to mend shattered bodies and minds. The sight of JD's naked arse being hammered by a masseuse is perhaps a low point in the history of factual TV.

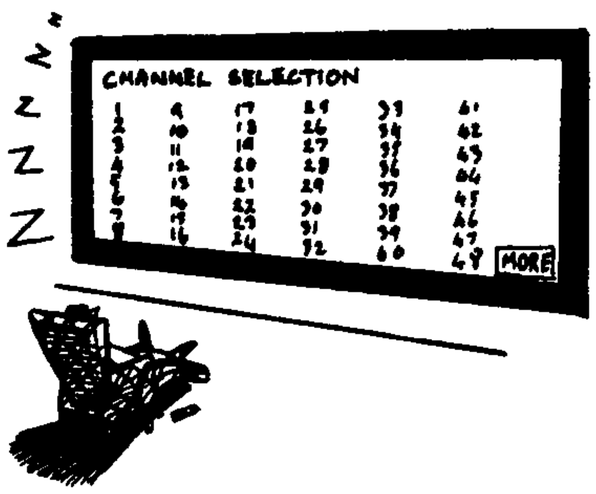
If even distinguished 63-year-old current-affairs presenters have to get their kit off on screen, the game may well be up.

*'Remote Controller'*

**THEN**




**NOW**

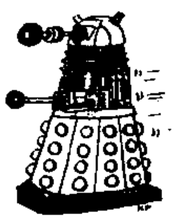



## NUMBER CRUNCHING

**£5.7m** Biggest ever fine imposed by Ofcom on ITV for "seriously and repeatedly misleading its audience" over premium-rate phone votes

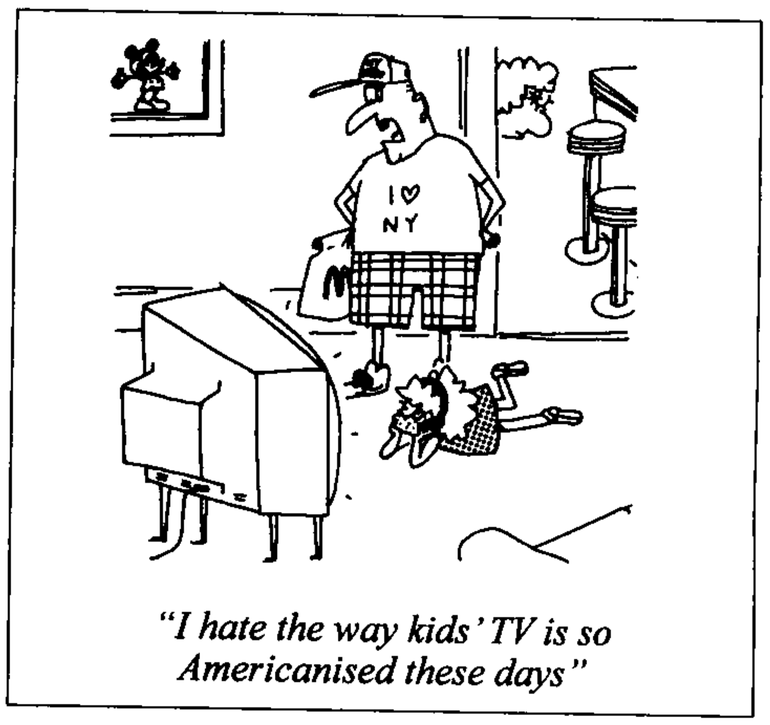
**£7.8m** Cash ITV is estimated to have conned from viewers in same phone votes

## BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"As you may be aware from the Barlesque mailing list, on May the 13th we are going to roll out a change to the Barley implementation used by DNA services in order to align it with the new visual language being used across bbc.co.uk. This change will be carried out by the DNA team and will require no work on your part… See the attached PDF for details of the change: Barley toolbar update – aligning legacy UK toolbars with the new global visual language."

*– Email to BBC producers announcing that websites will look a bit different, 30 April*




*"I hate the way kids' TV is so Americanised these days"*

## JUST FANCY THAT!

**ANOTHER week, another *Sun* columnist takes a pot-shot at the BBC. This time it's would-be cab driver Jon Gaunt laying into presenter Jeremy Vine.**

"Jeremy Whine is useless as Jimmy Young's successor... how come [he] gets so much work?" Of course Gaunt's annoyance isn't in the least bit motivated by the fact that Vine's Radio Two show goes out against his TalkSport programme and regularly thrashes it in the ratings – or that Vine has been honoured in the Sony Radio awards for the last two years, while poor old Gaunty hasn't had a look in!

## DUMB BRITAIN

*The Weakest Link, BBC2*

**Anne Robinson**: Which black American athlete won four gold medals at the 1936 Olympics?

**Contestant**: Jesse James.

**AR**: Which of the three British armed forces is known as "the senior service"?

**Contestant** (*and eventual winner*): The SS.

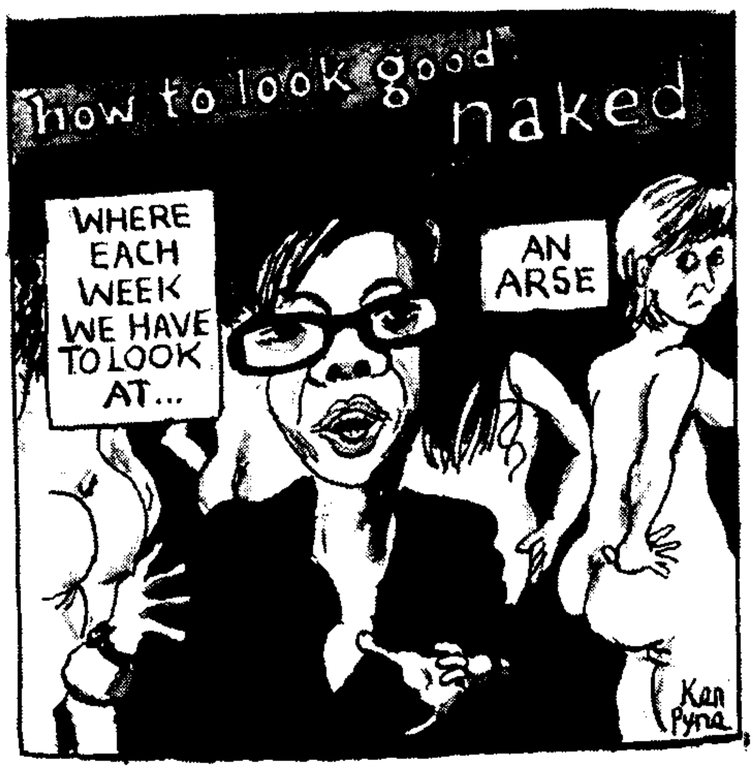
**AR**: What three-letter word means "at this moment"?

**Contestant**: Then.

*Are You Smarter Than A Ten-Year-Old, Sky 1*

**Presenter**: In Greek mythology, can you name one of the five rivers of Hades, the underworld?

**Contestant**: Oh Gawd! I only know two rivers: the Thames and the Nile. It's got to be the Nile. Is it?




## AD NAUSEAM

**IN *EYE* 1204 we noted how 4 March 2008 would go down in history as the date of the first sighting of an Olympic cash-in advert a mere four years before the games got underway.**

While the stadium may not have been built or the cheques signed, at least the important things are in place: the "top tier" sponsors and "partners" who are paying hundreds of millions of pounds in order to persuade the public that things like fast food and flat-screen TVs have something to do with the Olympic ideal.

London 2012 certainly intends to protect the interests of its patrons. Dalton Odendaal, 2012's senior sponsorship manager, has given his paymasters the strongest assurances that their names will be protected from so-called ambush marketing (ie Nike sticking up a huge poster outside an Adidas-sponsored venue, as it did to great effect in Euro 96.)

"It is trying to obtain an ill-gotten association – riding on the back of the event without paying for it," said Odendaal. "We take it very seriously. As well as comprehensive publicity, education and information programmes, we will have people circulating in the stadiums to make sure people are not taking in the wrong soft drinks, when there is a sponsor in that category."

This could get interesting: London's sponsors include Adidas, British Airways, BT, Lloyds TSB, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Panasonic, Samsung and Visa. Will Odendaal's "brand protection" shock-troops step in when punters turn up with the "wrong" food, using the "wrong" mobile, pay through the nose with the "wrong" credit card and leave the country in disgust on the "wrong" airline? In the spirit of the games, surely we should be told?

**WHAT is the truth behind the folksy claims made for that apparently irreproachable Scottish tipple, Highland Spring mineral water?**

According to the advert, the water bottled on the Blackford estate in Perthshire is "Protected, untouched, unspoiled. Refreshing isn't it?" But the sell line doesn't bear too much scrutiny.

The estate is owned by a multi-millionaire member of the Dubai royal family, Maher al-Tajir, who is accused by locals of operating a "modern-day Highland clearance" by allowing farm buildings and cottages on his 3,000 acres to fall vacant. The properties used to be leased to local families, but the Blackford estate claimed that if the houses were occupied there was potential for groundwater contamination.

In 2005, Perth and Kinross council had to order al-Tajir to remove padlocked gates that had been placed on a traditional rambling route across the estate. The landowner had also put up signs telling people to keep out, even though there was a right of access under land reform legislation.

Meanwhile in March this year an employment tribunal ruled that al-Tajir had unfairly sacked his gamekeeper after the man had the temerity to complain about not being paid. The tribunal heard that al-Tajir had told his ex-employee that he could buy off the justice system if he was taken to court over the unpaid £13,000.

No wonder the ad leaves a sour taste in the mouth of some locals.

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

**ZERO** Tolerance ITV boss Michael Grade promised last July for those "found to have set out to lie and deceive viewers"

**ZERO** Staff fired by Michael Grade despite Ofcom's ruling that ITV "seriously and repeatedly misled its audience"

## SUPA HE AIN'T

**AL JAZEERA makes much of its claim to be the only international TV station allowed to operate in Zimbabwe, even though its favoured status merely reflects the cravenness of its coverage. This is hardly surprising given the identity of Al Jaz's star reporter in Harare, Supa Mandiwanzira.**

Supa is a nephew-in-law of Gracia Machel, aka Comrade Bob's wife. Last year he was fired from his job as Zimbabwe correspondent of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) for setting up a sting operation in which carefully edited tapes were used to trick a Mugabe critic, Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube, into admitting adultery.

After the Southern Africa-based Solidarity Peace Trust claimed Mandiwanzira had not only smeared Ncube but had worked with Mugabe's feared Central Intelligence Organisation in doing so, the SABC was forced to act, dismissing him last September for "appalling and unprofessional conduct".

But Al Jaz had no qualms employing him. And two months later his gushing report on a "million-man march" in support of Mugabe provoked this broadcast riposte from Gerry Jackson, station manager of SW Radio Africa: "Supa Mandiwanzira is a known supporter of the ruling party… He does not mention that thousands of people were bussed into the capital from the rural areas either by force or – in the case of those who received farm equipment from the Reserve Bank – after being told to join the march or lose this equipment. Throughout Friday morning, soldiers and police went around high-density residential areas, forcing people out of their homes to march. Those who refused were beaten. Our correspondent was badly beaten."

No such treatment for Mandiwanzira, of course. His report, still featured on YouTube, has the intrepid hack being carried into Harare on the back of a truck, surrounded by Mugabe supporters.

One of Mandiwanzira's cronies is Reuben Barwe, a former chief correspondent for the state-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. Barwe's attentiveness to the whims of the corrupt and despotic president has brought its own rewards – namely a 2,000-acre farm in Mashonaland West. But he is not alone. Another early beneficiary of Mugabe's land grab from white Zimbabwean farmers is, er, Supa Mandiwanzira, proud owner of a farm in Mashonaland East.

Al Jazeera does have another Zimbabwean reporter, Haru Mutasa, who has fearlessly reported on the reality of life for ordinary Zimbabweans – but many in Southern Africa are beginning to ask whether her nemesis, Mandiwanzira, is part of the deal that keeps Al Jazeera in Harare. If that is true, they also want to know who from Al Jazeera TV's notoriously pisspoor management agreed the dirty deal with Mugabe's henchmen in the first place.

## MUSIC & MUSICIANS

**PERFORMANCES by the LSO and concerts at Wigmore Hall aside, the most consistently amazing thing about the British arts world is the sheer incompetence with which it manages itself and manages to appoint the wrong people to the top jobs.**

Last month's resignation of the British Council's arts director, Venu Dhupa, after only nine months (nine months of chaos, mayhem and upheaval) has been a miserable example. From the start Dhupa's credentials weren't obvious. For a few years she ran the Nottingham Playhouse (with debatable success) and was good at sitting on vague committees and obscure management panels. But most of all, her critics argue, she was good at knowing people and not shy of reminding them about the dues owed to an Asian woman in a business where political correctness counts.

Unfortunately she hadn't a clue about what it took to run the arts department, causing anger from the moment she arrived by announcing with childlike stupidity: "I am here to do cultural relations. I am not here to do arts."

As it turned out, her idea of "doing" even cultural relations left much to be desired. She started to dismantle everything, announcing "reforms" that were a virtual destruction of all the arts department stood for – closing its specialist advisory panels, sacking directors and generally turning the staff upside down.

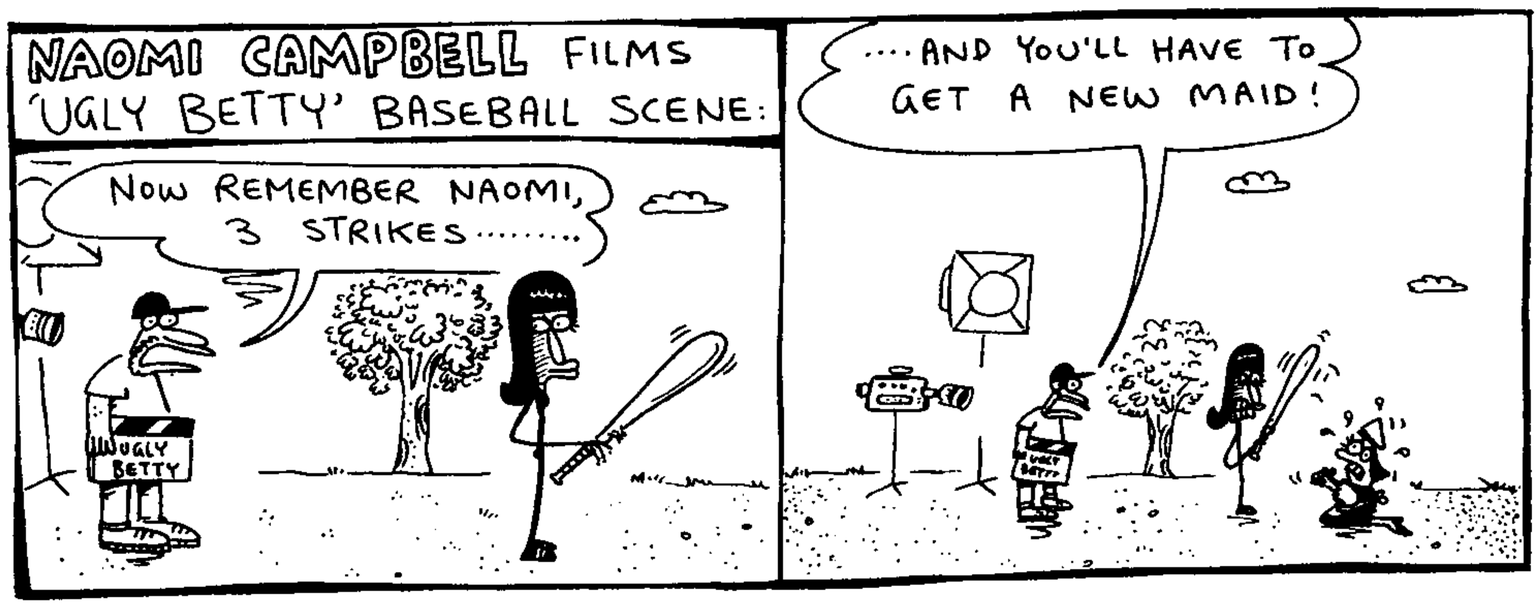
It was madness. There was an outcry, and in the end a cohort of cultural heavies led by Antony Gormley moved in and got it stopped. After months of furious self-defence, Ms Dhupa has fallen on her sword and been replaced. Sighs of relief all round. But as it starts to pick up the pieces, what does the council then announce? That it will be "maintaining contact" with Dhupa and "hopes to utilise her experience and knowledge in other ways".

As one contact inside the Council said: "Whatever *they're* hoping, *we're* hoping never to see her again. If this statement is more than a polite form of words, there will be people walking out of here in disgust."

*'Lunchtime O'Boulez'*

## SUPERMODELS

KERBER



## ROTTEN BOROUGHS

# PORTER'S REVENGE

AFTER eight years of being secretly run by the secretive Trots of Socialist Action, post-Livingstone London has fallen under the control of an even more sinister sect: the Tories of Westminster city council, who revere the memory of their disgraced ex-leader, Dame Shirley Porter.

Boris Johnson has effectively handed over City Hall to the control of three senior Westminster Tory councillors. Nicholas Boles, former director of the Tory think-tank Policy Exchange, becomes his interim chief-of-staff; Kit Malthouse, notorious for leading Westminster's negotiations with Dame Shirley which resulted in her paying just £12.3m of the nearly £49m she owed taxpayers for her gerrymandering corruption is a deputy mayor; and last but not least Sir Simon Milton, who is stepping down as leader of Westminster council next month to become Boris's lead adviser on planning and housing.

Milton was a member of Porter's housing committee that voted in February 1989 to house homeless people in asbestos-ridden tower blocks – an act described by Westminster's former chief executive Rodney Brooke as "simply criminal". Who better to help Boris increase and improve London's stock of social housing?

Meanwhile Westminster's chief executive, Peter Rogers (the man who distinguished himself by his sloth-like "pursuit" of Shirley's millions, sending an urgent letter to Porter in Israel with a 2nd class, 19p stamp, so it took 68 days to reach her by surface mail), becomes interim boss of the London Development Agency. Just the man to clear up the mess left by Ken's LDA boss Manny Lewis, "General" Lee Jasper and his legion of honey-glazed lovelies!

The Boris victory has proved sublime revenge for Milton. His predecessor, Ken's chief housing adviser, was Neale Coleman, who was Labour's housing spokesman on Westminster council in the 1980s and the driving force in exposing the corruption of Milton's "old friend and colleague", Porter. Coleman's wife, Elinor Young, was Ken's planning adviser. Milton now has both their jobs. Young entered her office on Tuesday 6 May to find a Milton flunky at her desk. After a subsequent encounter in the lift with the new mayor – who didn't know who she was – Young threw up. So that's what they mean by "the Boris effect"!

# SLAGGED OFF

THE *Eye*'s Glenda Slagg has been dragged into a row about freedom of speech in the Sussex town of Lewes.

Local artist Jenny Mumford, fed up with Lewes district council's habit of approving crap schemes of flats despite the protests of locals, fixed a painting featuring a gorgeous, pouting Glenda lookalike to the front of her house. A speech bubble asked: "More development! Aren'tcha sick of it?"

Within days of Mumford's "homage to Glenda" appearing she received a visit from a council "enforcement officer" who ordered her to take it down or face prosecution "for criminal damage to a listed building". By the time the story reached the local paper the Lib Dem council's line had changed, claiming the offence was "displaying an illegal advertisement". The result of this bone-headed approach has been to unite the town behind the anti-development cause and, indeed, Glenda – the girl who put the "pro" into "protest"!

● **BUCKING the trend of low election turnouts is the parish council of Hesketh-with-Becconsall near Ormskirk, Lancs, which on 2 May declared the results of the previous day's poll. Figures on the official declaration revealed that the parish had 3,090 electors and that, er, 4,519 ballot papers were issued. Continuing with the impeccable maths, returning officer Bill Taylor noted that this represented a turnout of 146.25 percent. That nice Mr Mugabe would be proud.**

# KNIFE WORK

AFTER taking a pasting from the Conservatives on 1 May, losing seats in wards where in the past Tories were an unknown species, the ruling Labour group on Sunderland city council decided to despatch its useless leader, Bob Symonds.

Who better to, er, wield the knife than Symonds's deputy, Paul "Stabber" Watson, the social club owner who earned his affectionate sobriquet after beating a murder rap in 1995 following the death of a burglar who broke into his club (*Eyes passim*)?

In his first week as council leader, alas, "Stabber" has proved as ineffective as his predecessor. Despite being elected by a 31-17 majority of the Labour group, Watson bottled out of a ruthless reshuffle, so now finds himself outnumbered by Symonds's cronies 5-3 in the council's cabinet.

And only days after choosing a new chief whip, Mary Smith, Watson has had to sack her after the Tories kicked up a fuss, saying she could not be both Labour chief whip and the council's mayor-elect. Actually it was none of their business, but so weak is Watson that he caved in. Yet to come are the outcomes of investigations by the district auditor, the Standards Board and, possibly, Watson's old friend Inspector Knacker, into how the council proposed to pay him £270,000 to give up the lease of his club because it was wanted by a developer (*Eye* 1207).

● **A DECADE ago the London borough of Hounslow "outsourced" parks, libraries, leisure centres and museums to a "not-for-profit" group called the Community Initiative Partnership (CIP). The brainchild of Howard "Hairy" Simmons, Hounslow's assistant chief executive, CIP was supposed to create massive savings for the council and raise money via new business, such as the maintenance of local sports pitches, school grounds, etc.**

**Unfortunately no one thought through the new set-up properly. While gardeners concentrated on the new commercial contracts (using publicly-paid-for equipment and staff) the public parks were neglected. With a feeble management structure, little supervision, and no accountability, CIP became a by-word for incompetence and waste. Any complaints were buck-passed between contractor and council. The chief executive took long-term sick leave.**

**Hounslow fell to the Tories at the 2006 local elections, as CIP's 10-year contract was running out. After an open tendering process, CIP unsurprisingly failed to make the shortlist. Shocked into action, it has now lodged a claim against Hounslow for more than £11m plus interest for breach of its contract and funding agreement. Unless it gets its way the group has threatened to pull out, leaving libraries and swimming pools closed. CIP staff, worried about their jobs, have balloted for strike action, provisionally scheduled for the end of the month.**

**Bewildered residents wait to see how much this is going to cost them, and whether already pisspoor services will be further disrupted. Meanwhile "Hairy" Simmons, his outsourcing dream in ruins, must console himself with his meagre £102,711 salary.**

# TALK AIN'T CHEAP

BIG spending on bullshit on the Isle of Wight, where the ruling Tories have signed a contract worth £570,000 a year under which Westminster city council's communications department will continue to do their talking for them.

The island's total bill for spin is now running at more than £850,000, when salaries are taken into account, which has led the cash-cautious caulkheads to mutter about the innocent days of the 1980s, when the council got by perfectly well with one part-time public relations officer.

The council's scrutiny committee, which wants to know whether any officials "have been in receipt of gifts or hospitality from Westminster city council" has discovered that the contract was authorised by a trio of officials under delegated powers. Chief among them was none other than the council's interim finance supremo, Dave Burbage.

The decision to award the PR contract to Westminster was not minuted and Burbage claims he "forgot" the requirement for officials to tell the scrutiny chairman about delegated actions. This may bode ill for his imminent elevation to the job of interim chief executive to replace Joe Duckworth, who arrived on the island less than two years ago from Westminster (there's a coincidence!) and is soon off to be chief executive at Newham... the job previously occupied by Dave Burbage (ooh, there's another!)

● **TOUGH times require tough decisions, which is why Labour-run Rotherham council, with deep regret, has had to withdraw its annual grant of £7,500 to a talking books for the blind service as part of a series of cost-cutting measures. When Labour councillor Peter Thirlwall discovered that the council had just spent almost exactly the same sum – £7,400 – on a jolly to London for 18 officers and councillors to attend the annual *Municipal Journal* awards ceremony, he proposed that, if charities and voluntary groups were having their grants cut, members should set an example and reduce by half the amount spent on piss-ups, sorry, conferences, seminars and award ceremonies – £29,000 in the past six months alone. Alas Thirlwall was unable to find a seconder. It is, after all, a matter of priorities.**

## IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

I'M SICK OF THE INSIDIOUS ENCROACHMENT OF CCTV!
ONE CAN'T WALK DOWN A STREET OR GO SHOPPING WITHOUT BEING PRIED UPON BY BIG BROTHER!
CALLING ALL UNITS: I HAVE TWO SHIFTY LOOKING INDIVIDUALS LOITERING OUTSIDE THE 'HAPPY GUAVA' HEALTH FOOD SHOP - THEY ARE CLEARLY CASING THE JOINT...
I COULD WINDOW SHOP HERE FOR HOURS...
THEIR PORCINI MUSHROOM DISPLAY IS MESMERISING...

# NOOKS and CORNERS

**PERHAPS it is a good sign that the newly elected mayor of London Boris Johnson couldn't remember which of our two ennobled High Tech geniuses – Foster 'n' Rogers – designed the ridiculous building which is his headquarters. His ignorance about architects suggests he is unlikely to employ Richard Rogers as an architectural and urban planning "adviser" as did Ken Livingstone.**

City Hall, that lop-sided spherical steel 'n' glass structure near Tower Bridge, was of course designed by the firm of Norman Foster. I am well aware some readers of this column follow the establishment line that Lord Foster of Thames Bank is the greatest architect ever to emerge from these islands and that his ubiquitous creations are a boon to humanity, not least in those happy totalitarian regimes which commission him, like China and Kazakhstan. Dare one suggest, however, that not all the schemes that pour from Foster's strictly regimented design machines around the world are quite of the standard we have learned to expect from the master?

Two have recently figured in this column: in Ealing (*Eye* 1199) and in Shoreditch (*Eye* 1203). The ill-considered scheme to cram towers into Ealing Broadway has, I am happy to report, been turned down (for the moment). As regards Shoreditch, campaigners are continuing to fight for The Light, the former electricity generating station which has been converted into a bar and restaurant.

In the massive commercial redevelopment scheme being promoted by Hammersons, The Light is to be demolished to make way for the 51-storey Bishop's Place complex designed by Foster & Partners. Hackney council has declined to include this building and its decent, humanly-scaled neighbours in the Shoreditch Conservation Area – not surprising as the council owns part of the site and stands to make a tidy sum out of it if the development goes ahead.

The Foster firm has also claimed that the demolition of the former generating station is inevitable. The Light stands between Shoreditch High Street and the cutting behind Liverpool Street Station, and Fosters has repeatedly explained that it cannot possibly survive as Network Rail plans to widen the railway to eight tracks. How odd that the chief executive of Network Rail has written to the South Shoreditch Conservation Area Action Committee that: "Network Rail has not submitted any plans or made any application for development in this area which would require the demolition of property, and we are unaware of any proposals from any other party affecting the railway."

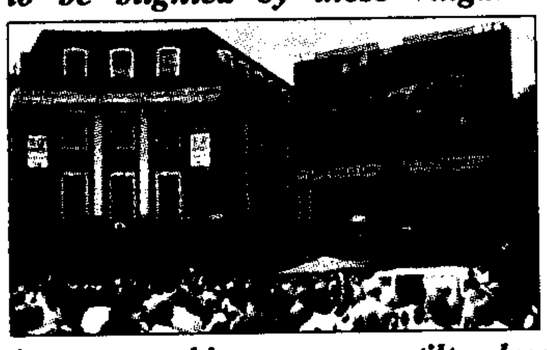
Norman Foster is a national treasure, so I suppose we should not begrudge him his immense wealth (with his fortune of £250m he ranks 325th in the latest *Sunday Times* Rich List). But questions are now being asked about his status as a life peer since it emerged that the great architect has become a Swiss resident to avoid paying British taxes.

Our Norm was made a life peer in 1999 and has attended the House of Lords twice since then. As the Liberal Democrat peer, Michael Oakshott – who is sponsoring a bill to make peers who avoid British taxes resign – commented: "It's grossly unfair to be able to vote on laws and taxes and pop off to Switzerland to avoid paying tax."

Milord Rogers meanwhile, together with his lady wife Ruthie, is worth a mere £52m and comes 1415th in the Rich List. Once the crony of Blair and glamorous adviser to New Labour on how to make our urban spaces look like Barcelona, his firm was responsible for the design triumph of Terminal Five at Heathrow. At least he still lives in London.

***A NEW horror emerges from the cultural disaster which is the 2012 London Olympic Games and the effects will be felt nationwide.***

***Giant digital screens are to be put up in towns and city centres across the UK as part of the promised permanent legacy of the games. The Live Sites initiative will cost £45m, yet there is nothing in the budget to improve the public spaces that are to be blighted by these vulgar and obtrusive***

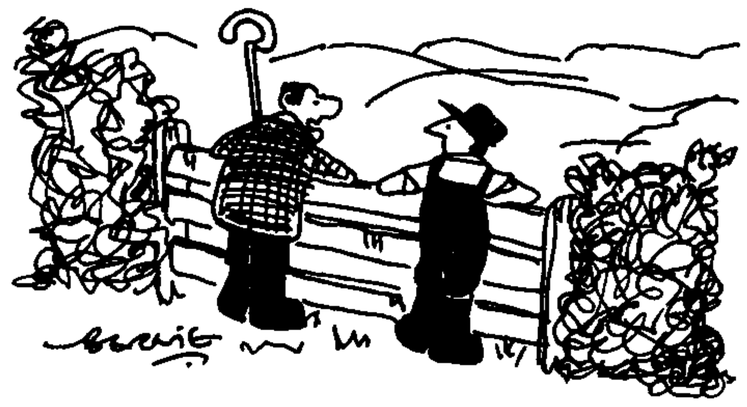


***lumps of modern technology. Nine cities have already been chosen for a pilot project, so in Hull, for instance, a big screen on stilts already dominates the city centre.***

***These screens will not just show Olympic events to sports fans, for a partnership between the London Organising Committee of the Games, the BBC and local authorities envisages continuous 18-24 hour broadcasting of other pisspoor material. What this means for noise and light pollution, public safety and the encouragement of night time binge drinking can easily be imagined – but what of the visual effect on our towns and cities? Under planning law, there is no difference between these Live Sites screens and commercial advertising screens. The permanent legacy of the Olympics is thus likely to be the trashing of city centres across the land.***

***Mike Gibbons, head of Live Sites, gushes how: "These screens can also let you take part by sending and receiving pictures and texts." In 1984, lest we forget, the population is controlled by the telescreen, two-way TV sets placed in all public and private places, which can never be turned off. As with ID cards, Labour seems determined to realise Orwell's nightmare vision. Big Brother is indeed watching you!***

*'Piloti'*



*"Flooded fields now commonplace – rice prices have trebled – are you thinking what I'm thinking?"*

## Down on the Farm

**THE European Union's greatest asset is perhaps that its workings are so boring it can perpetrate one colossal blunder after another without anyone noticing. What other explanation can there be for the lack of coverage of its decision last year to sell off its remaining grain stocks at knockdown prices as global grain prices were about to double and the world faced its first serious food shortage for decades?**

The result is that the EU has now been forced to become the world's largest grain importer, buying in 18m tons of wheat at prices much higher than those it was selling for only a short time earlier.

The reason for this disastrous misjudgement goes back to the time when the EU came under fire for piling up vast food mountains, thanks to its protection of European farmers by buying their crops into "intervention" when prices fell below a certain level. The EU then paid further subsidies for those food mountains which were not kept in storage to be sold off to the Third World at rock-bottom prices, doing immense damage to the farmers of some of the poorest countries of the world, who could not compete with the EU's dumping of its cheap surpluses.

In 2007, having ditched its old system of subsidising over-production and anticipating a bumper European harvest, Brussels decided to empty its warehouses, selling off millions of tons of grain for animal feed. Bang on cue, down came the rains, with disastrous effect on the harvest. Europe was thus forced to go out into the world market place, to buy those million tons of wheat at twice the price it had been at the start of the summer.

As the price of a loaf of bread rises above £1, everyone is now familiar with the fact that wheat and other cereal prices have soared in the past year. One explanation commonly given is that, as China and India become richer, more of their people can afford to eat meat, and they must thus import more grain to feed their animals. But the facts simply don't bear this out. Last year the imports of wheat by China and India, the world's two largest wheat growers, scarcely rose.

By far the biggest jump in demand, thus driving prices even higher, came from the EU and America. US cereal consumption last year rose by a staggering 12 percent, almost entirely due to that country's new-found obsession with biofuels, using up no less than 30m tons of corn.

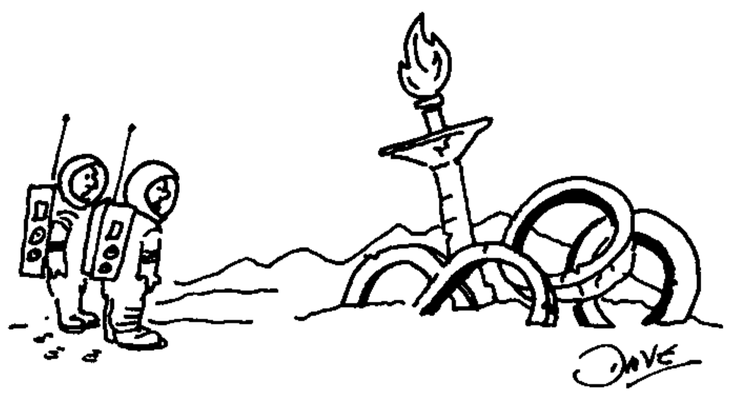
No matter that even the most rabid environmentalists now realise that biofuels are a massive ecological disaster – costing 70 percent more energy to produce than they generate, laying waste to rainforests and giving off some pretty nasty pollution into the bargain. No one is keener on biofuels than US farmers, who receive a hefty subsidy to grow them, and the EU itself, which has ordered us to derive 10 percent of our transport energy from biofuels within 12 years. But of course every acre of land used to make biofuel is taken away from producing food.

In the EU alone even Brussels has to admit now that we may soon be having to divert more than 30 percent of our grain-producing land to biofuel. What a perfect moment, in short, for the EU to sell its remaining grain stocks. Stand by for those world prices to go higher still.

*'Muckspreader'*

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS — BY BIRCH

He's some guy, that Banksy! His work sells for a fortune to Hollywood stars...
Yet he keeps his integrity, putting on festivals of street art...
And so engagingly modest that he remains anonymous.
The bastard!



*"Clearly an ancient and once-great civilisation destroyed by a single catastrophic event..."*

## HUMAN FRIGHTS

**THE latest fashion in libel is for the alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses to hit their critics with writs and enormous costs. "It's the next big thing in the law," the defence solicitor Mark Stephens told the *Eye*. "The new way to scrape the bottom of the barrel."**

City law firms and, inevitably, the lawyers at Carter Fuck have realised that critics of multinationals and alleged war criminals are putting more and more information on the net. Scrutinise it long enough and they can find a fact or assertion that can't be defended in London's notoriously authoritarian high court, and – bingo! – a case is up and running.

Human Rights Watch has been hit; as has Global Witness after it published details of how the son of the president of the poverty-stricken Congo was spending a fortune on luxury hotels and goods. (The president claimed it was "racist" for Global Witness to reproduce his son's lavish credit card bills on its website.) Even if they see off the threats, as Global Witness did, energy is diverted and time and money spent dealing with lawyers rather than getting on with their campaigns.

For multinationals, English libel law is proving a useful means to sidetrack opponents. The most blatant example concerns Trafigura, the Dutch-based trading company. On 6 August 2006, a ship it chartered, the *Probo Koala*, unloaded its cargo in Abidjan, the main economic capital of the Ivory Coast. By early September, six people had died as a result of toxic waste poisoning and thousands had sought medical treatment. The Ivory Coast cabinet resigned for allowing poisonous waste to be dumped, but Trafigura vigorously denied wrongdoing. The families of the dead and the sick arranged to sue for compensation.

It seemed to be a standard confrontation. But Trafigura's lawyers noticed that Leigh Day & Co, the British solicitors representing some Abidjan residents, had printed the accusations on its website. A writ duly arrived, and instead of preparing a case against Trafigura, the solicitors had to defend themselves.

US judges are throwing out what they call "Slapp" lawsuits – "Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation" – brought by rich men and organisations with the intention of tying up the resources of their critics. But the British judiciary shows no similar willingness to defend the freedoms of a democratic society. This year alone they allowed the Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov to sue the *Kyiv Post* in London, even though it has just 100 British subscribers. If anything, a second action they allowed him to bring in London against the Ukrainian *Obozrevatel* (Observer), an internet news site, was more outrageous. It doesn't even publish in English.

While the law lords and government allow judges to run amok, Britain is becoming an international pariah. As Chris Walker of Freedom House, an American lobby group, put it, our libel law is "manna from heaven for deeply illiberal and fantastically wealthy ex-Soviet oligarchs and Middle Eastern oil tycoons. Everyone knows the potency of the English laws and everyone takes it into account, at an incalculable cost to free speech."

***'Ratbiter'***

# Letters

Private Eye

## Cover story

*Sir,*

*Eye 36, 3 May 1963 (price: 1/-) – cover story "Mayday Mayday"; Eye 1209, 2 May 2008 (price: £1.50) – cover story "Mayday Mayday". Have you no new ideas? If you persist in using the same cover story every 45 years I may consider cancelling my subscription etc.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*PATRICIA MOORE,*
*Yardley, Birmingham.*

*Sir,*

*Cancel the "Mayday" – the poor bastard is dead in the water!*

*BRIAN ROWLANDS,*
*Via email.*

## Sick joke

*Sir,*

*Can I be apparently the first person to suggest that there are more than enough reasons to mock John Prescott without resorting to quite despicable playground bullying tactics? The hilarity that has followed his revelation that he suffered from bulimia has been pretty abhorrent – it was expected from the likes of The Mail and The Express (many of the posters on their websites argued that anyone who believed in eating disorders was gullible) but I had mistakenly hoped that in Eye 1209 you might satirise the media's response, rather than Prescott himself.*

*I shall not be cancelling my subscription, but only on the basis that there may be things I need to complain about in later issues.*

*Regards,*
*MARTY JARVIS,*
*Via email.*

## Far from the Maddie crowd

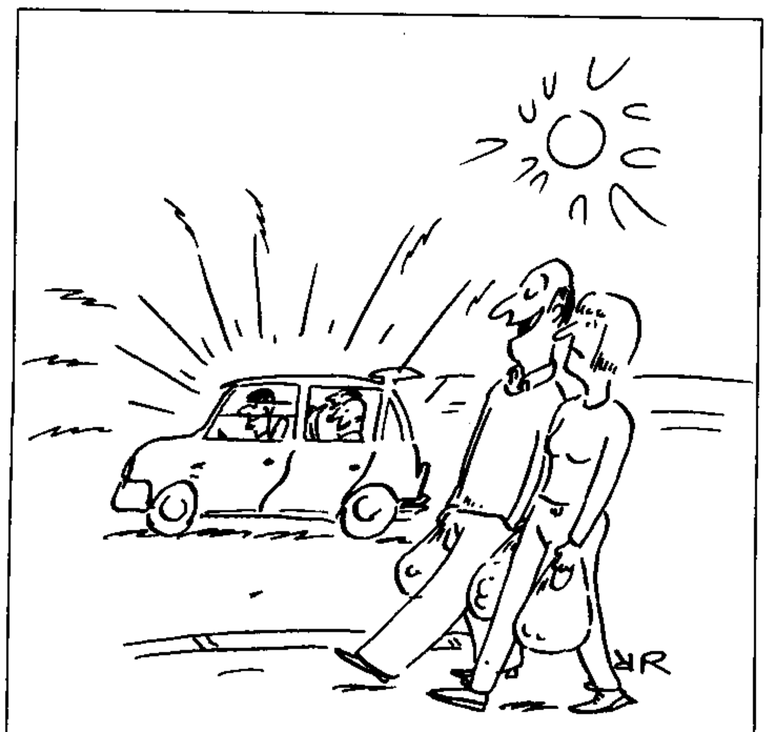
*Sir.*

*Poor Maddie is not a suitable subject for a magazine such as Private Eye.*

*You can give Phil Space plenty of targets like Brown/Blair/Mandelson and the Old Fugger etc.*

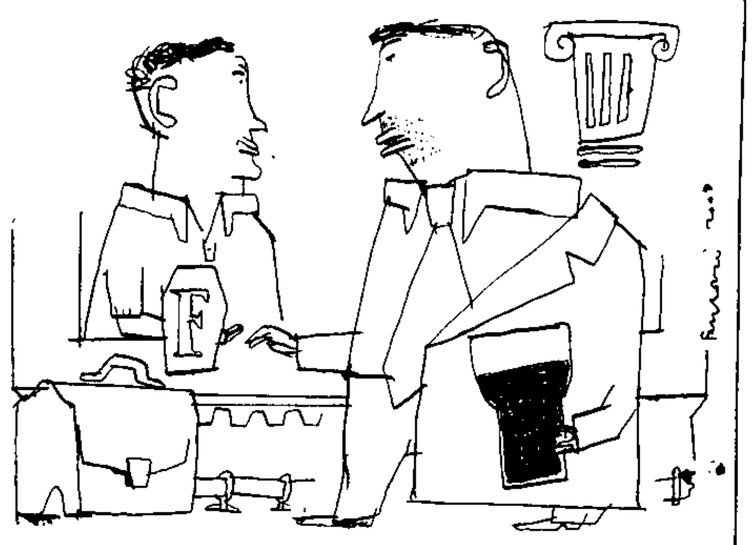
*Shame on you.*

*Yours in sorrow.*
*K. SCHWARZ,*
*Bordeaux.*



*"It's the first booming bassline of summer"*

## Scenes You Seldom See



*"At the first sign I'm binge drinking, call a cab and send me home"*

## Talking crap?

*Sir,*

*Eco Worrier worries too much (Eye 1209). His/her views seem to be a bit out-of-date.*

*For 4000 years, China, Japan & Korea spread human manure – "night soil" – on their vegetables and rice. As a result, they sustainably fed 5 times as many people per hectare as the UK could support by today's so-called "organic farming". Read the book by King, "Farmers of Forty Centuries". It was written and published about 100 years ago – so long that it's now freely available for us all to read on Google.*

*It's true that people in those days sometimes failed to compost the waste long enough. Cooking was the cure. The small risk of pathogens explains why to this day, traditional Chinese cuisine contains no salad – the veg is always cooked.*

*Yours,*
*DAVID OLIVIER,*
*Leominster.*

## Bending the rules

*Sir,*

*As a public schoolboy with a first in engineering, I can assure you with regard to Bill Dean's statement that attaching a trailer or back half of a bus increases its turning circle that any fule kno no such thing. If he were right, it would be impossible for long trains to travel over the same tracks as short ones. What's more, turning circle isn't even relevant.*

*To be charitable perhaps Mr. Dean is using the expression "turning circle" because it is familiar to the layman, but it has nothing to do with the "cyclist killing zone". In an unarticulated vehicle with fixed rear wheels these trace an arc of smaller radius than do the front wheels, and the space between the two arcs is swept by the body of the vehicle and thus constitutes the danger area. For such a vehicle, the shorter the wheelbase the smaller this area. It is therefore smaller for the front half of a bendy bus than for a Routemaster.*

*It is true that a trailer or bendy bus rear part will tend to travel over a still smaller radius than the rear of the main vehicle, but the relationship is not a simple one, depending not only on hitch-to-axle distances but also on the wonders of multi-wheel steering such as are incorporated in road trains enabling each part of them to follow-the-leader as if on a track, and which I presume are incorporated in the bendy bus. In short, without knowing far more detail about its articulation and axles it is impossible to say whether the bendy bus killing zone is greater. As a keen cyclist I do know this though, if you cycle in London you're an idiot anyway.*

*PHILIP NICE,*
*Via email.*

## Prostate practice

*Sir,*

*It came as no surprise to me when Medicine Balls revealed that some men are being denied brachytherapy as a treatment for prostate cancer (Eye 1208).*

*When I was diagnosed last year I was pushed towards surgery only to discover, through the helpline of a national charity, that high dose brachytherapy, which was suitable for my aggressive cancer, was available within the same NHS Trust.*

*With the help of a brilliant doctor and a supportive team I underwent the treatment which has (so far at least) beaten the cancer and led to a restored libido, very important to me since I am only 50. However, when I question the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust as to why I had not been informed of this option a finger wagging deputy medical director told me that they were under no obligation to tell me. This was not, in my opinion, a decision based on cost. Rather, it was a defence of surgery in the face of more advanced and less intrusive methods of treatment just as when Fleet Street printers hung on to outdated practices in the 1980s.*

*Yours,*
*GEOFF HOLDEN,*

*Via email.*

*"Oi! You lookin' at my bird's nest?"*

## More queue balls

*Sir,*

*Tony Vinicombe accuses me of repeating a lie that choosing private treatment is not jumping the NHS queue and does not benefit the NHS (Letters, Eye 1209).*

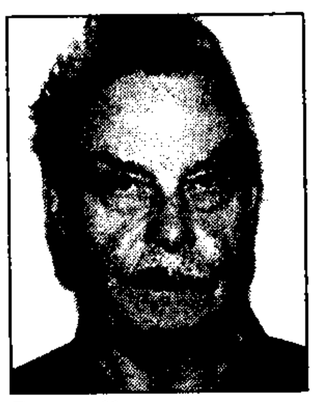
*The consultant that his wife saw in a private hospital was not working in time paid for by the NHS – he was on overtime paid for by the patient. If he were to be "transferred to NHS facilities instead", then the NHS would have to pay for the overtime – and they don't.*

*His metaphor regarding shop queues is equally fanciful. If I was faced with a queue in a shop, I would go to another shop. However if I left the money for my purchase at the first shop, before going elsewhere and paying again, the customers of the first shop could only benefit and its owners would have no need or incentive to improve their service.*

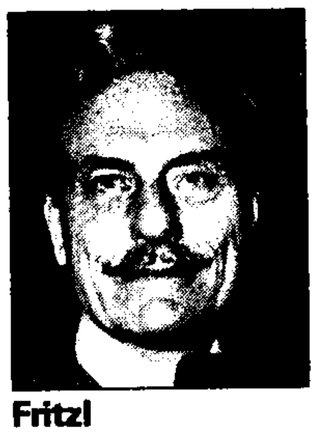
*Yours faithfully,*
*RICHARD HOOK,*

*Blackpool.*

## Lookalike



**Powell**



**Fritzl**

*Sir,*

*On seeing pictures of Austrian "dungeon dad" Josef Fritzl, I was struck by his resemblance to the late Enoch Powell. Could they be related in some way?*

*ENA B. MADEUPNAME,*

*London W1.*

## Colemanballs

*£10 paid for contributions*

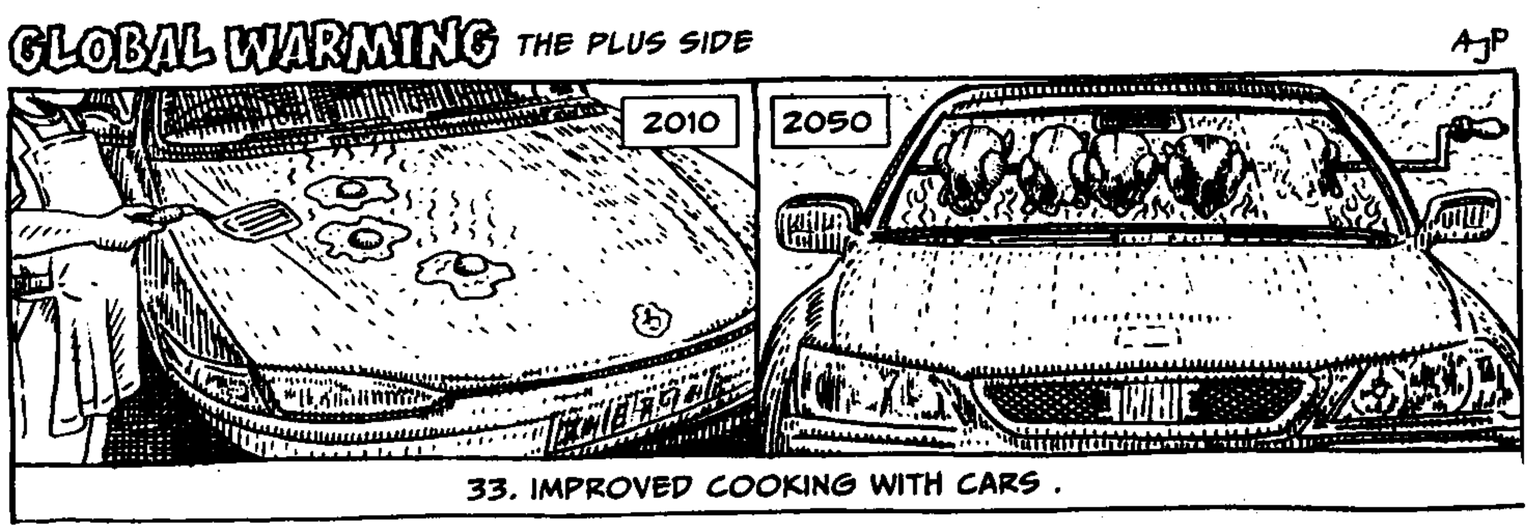
*"We operate 24/7, six days a week."*
**Representative of McCanns factory, Peterborough, Radio 4**
(Andrew Peile)

*"De Kock looking for a crack..."*
**MILES HARRISON, Sky Sports**
(Harry Johnston)

*"I think I can honestly say to any Newcastle fan: we can't get anywhere near the top four. We can get fifth, if you call that near."*
**KEVIN KEEGAN, Radio 5 Live**
(Antony Edmonds)

*"... great snooker from Ronnie O'Sullivan – literally just blew Stephen Hendry away."*
**ANDY TOWNSEND, talkSPORT**
(Glyn Berrington)

*"There was plenty of brown poking out; it must have been the tension."*
**JOHN VIRGO, BBC**
(Alex Orton)




## Pedants Cor'ner

*... I don't suppose any of you classically educated lot will have spotted this, but the cartoon on page 14 of Eye 1209 simply would not occur. Amongst lions, hunting is woman's work; the male would be enjoying his relaxation under some shade somewhere while the wives all went out doing the shopping.*

*BRYN GLOVER.*

*...In response to Brian Graham's letter, and in defence of Bookworm, it should be noted that David Kynaston's **Austerity Britain** does relate to the years 1945-1951. When published in paperback, Austerity Britain will be split into 2 volumes; **Austerity Britain: A World To Build**, which covers the years 1945 to 1948, and **Austerity Britain: Smoke In The Valley**, which covers the years 1948 to 1951. Maybe Mr. Graham should have paid more attention to his editor. Pip pip, indeed!*

*STEPHEN HART.*

*... With reference to the letter from Prof Peter Mathieson in Eye 1209. Creatinine is not a protein as stated by the Professor, it is simply a small molecule which can be used as a marker for renal function.*

*Proteins are constructed from amino acids and are quite distinct from molecules such as creatinine. The correct chemical name for creatinine is: 2-amino-1-methyl-5H-imidazol-4-one.*

*DR BEN CLIFF.*

*I would like to be pedantic about E.J. Thribb: it's Lyttelton not Lyttleton as any fule kno.*

*NEIL McARTHUR.*

*... So "a building needs a roof" then (Letters, Eye 1209)? So the Coliseum in Rome, London's Wembley Stadium and any number of other open-to-the-elements structures are not buildings?*

*ANDREW RICHARDS.*

*... Not sure if this is pedantry, but, re Piloti's coverage of the Dyson School of Design Innovation in issue 1207 (and Eyes passim 1176 and 1195), the former Newark Works building, in which my dear ol grampie got his mitts dirty as one of those cranemakers to the world (or at least the British Empire) was in fact owned by Stotherts and Pitt, not Stotherd, as wrongly named three times now.*

*STEVE WAKEFIELD.*

*... I'm not too keen on "grinning oaf" Jasper Gerard either, (Street of Shame, Eye 1209), but after questioning the accuracy of his sealion-related jottings, you may care to re-examine your own copy: "The English Channel off Whitstable"? Down here, we reckon it's the Thames Estuary...*

*Do I get a pencil? Or is that Viz?*

*PAUL TOWNSEND.*

*... Laurie Marks may be right about Belarus but he is wrong about fules. The phrase is spelt "as any fule kno" not "as any fule no", as any fule kno.*

*MICHAEL BYWATER.*

*... Clive Dixon is not as pedantic as he thinks. Ezra and Daniel are not part of the Torah (Law) but of Ketuvim (Writings).*

*SUE JOHNSON.*

*... With reference to the letter from Barry Humphries on the look-alikes "Ken" and "Gibbon" I would note, as an ex-researcher in primate behaviour, that gibbons are agile and beautiful apes and not devious monkeys.*

*MARTIN WATERHOUSE.*

## Letter from **Yerevan**

*from Our Own Correspondent*

**TO THE sound of Charles Aznavour, our favourite crooner, booming out of giant loudspeakers, Armenians gathered in Republic square last month to celebrate the inauguration of our glorious new president, Serzh Sarkisian. All around us, uniformed policemen and plain-clothed security goons waited to pounce at the slightest hint of trouble.**

A crowd of peaceful anti-government protesters that had formed in a side street was dispersed with haste and shepherded into the back of a police van. Sarkisian, a former security chief, defence minister and prime minister wanted to show who is boss. We got the message loud and clear.

This is the new Armenia and we must get used to it. The chill wind of repression blowing across the Caucasus has finally settled in our country of around 3m and shattered our reputation as a bastion of stability in a volatile region.

Having watched police in Georgia and Azerbaijan crack the skulls of opposition demonstrators, our government used the same tactics but with greater brutality. The inevitable showdown came on 1 March when downtown Yerevan became a battleground between thousands of supporters of opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrossian (LTP) and pro-government forces. After a day-long stand-off, police moved in with batons, teargas, bullets, water cannon and anything else they could grab. Officially eight died and 130 were injured but the actual body count was almost certainly higher.

As with the clashes in Tbilisi and Baku, the Yerevan bloodbath was sparked by a dodgy election. Supporters of LTP, independent Armenia's first president from 1991 to 1998, were convinced their man had triumphed over Sarkisian, who was declared winner by a clear majority of 53 percent. In fact LTP was always up against it: the state media were firmly behind Sarkisian; the other candidates had all the attributes of stalking horses; and voter turn-out was highest in remote villages that independent observers were unable to visit. These were classic post-Soviet elections.

One reason the Yerevan riot was so large was that Sarkisian and outgoing president Robert Kocharyan are both seen as outsiders who have created a clique that has trousered large chunks of the capital's wealth. Both are from the troubled region of Nagorno-Karabakh, over which Armenia and Azerbaijan fought a bloody (and still unresolved) conflict in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

With LTP under virtual house arrest and the police and army in control, the new president can now turn his attention to the economy. But Sarkisian's hands are tied as we have little in the way of natural resources and cannot trade with either Turkey or Azerbaijan, which have kept their borders closed for years. We have no choice but to rely on goods coming from Iran in the south and Russia and Georgia to the north; plus whatever we can produce ourselves, which apart from our mouth-watering cognac is not much. Our big fear is that Azerbaijan will spend more and more of its oil revenues to build up its army in preparation for a campaign to retake Karabakh.

If one country has profited from our problems, it has to be Russia, our key ally and protector. The Russians, who keep a military base in Armenia and supply us with arms, gas and whatever else we need, have taken full advantage of our dependence by taking control of several juicy enterprises. Gazprom, for example, controls our gas and electricity industries and is also involved in banking. Metals giant Rusal owns a factory in Yerevan, while state-owned Rosatom recently signed an agreement to explore for uranium. No surprise Sarkisian chose Moscow for his first overseas visit and that no one mentions the bloody events of 1 March.

# FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

⭘ "It is painful and difficult," Ruben Enaje told reporters in the village of San Pedro Cutud, north of Manila, "but I will continue doing this until God decides otherwise. For the past twenty-two years, I have celebrated each Easter by wearing a crown of thorns and being nailed to a cross, except for one occasion eight years ago, when I had diarhhoea and my wife was poorly with worms, so I decided to skip it. This year, there are nineteen of us, and we will begin by stripping to the waist and whipping ourselves bloody with strips of bamboo to atone for our sins. Then we will lie on these wooden crosses while nails are driven into our palms, and the crosses are raised up on the hillside. My crucifixion is my annual pledge to God."

Although crucifixion is frowned upon by the Roman Catholic Church, parish priest Father Norman Vitug described it as "an expression of their faith. We cannot question somebody's faith. However, the Church does not recommend crucifixion because the Church is against self-flagellation. The Church does not want us to hurt ourselves to experience the Love of God." A spokesman for the Philippines Health Department added that "people taking part in crucifixions and self-flagellation rituals are advised to get a tetanus shot first, and to sterilize the nails to avoid infections." *(Taipei Times, 22/3/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

– ⭘ –

⭘ *"I am shattered, and do not know what to do," Dwarika Prasad told the manager of the Central Bank of India in Patna, "because my entire life savings have been totally eaten. In 2005, I put banknotes and investment certificates worth hundreds of thousands of rupees into my safety deposit box, and thought they would keep me in my old age. But now I find they have been eaten by termites, and the bank is refusing to accept any liability. I was never warned about this problem, and now all I have is a boxful of termite dust and a few investment papers that are so badly munched they are unreadable."*

*Bank manager YP Saha denied all responsibility for the loss, explaining that "the bank is only liable for damage to a safe box when the lock has been broken, which is not the case here. About a year ago, we started to receive complaints about termites in safe deposit boxes, so we sprayed some pesticide around the bank, and put up a notice warning about them. Mr Prasad was not a regular visitor to the bank, so he did not see the notice, but we have no liability in this matter. His papers may have turned to dust, but the lock on his box is secure, so the bank is not answerable. That is the law and that is that."* (India Uncut, 6/4/08. Spotter: Michael Plumbe)

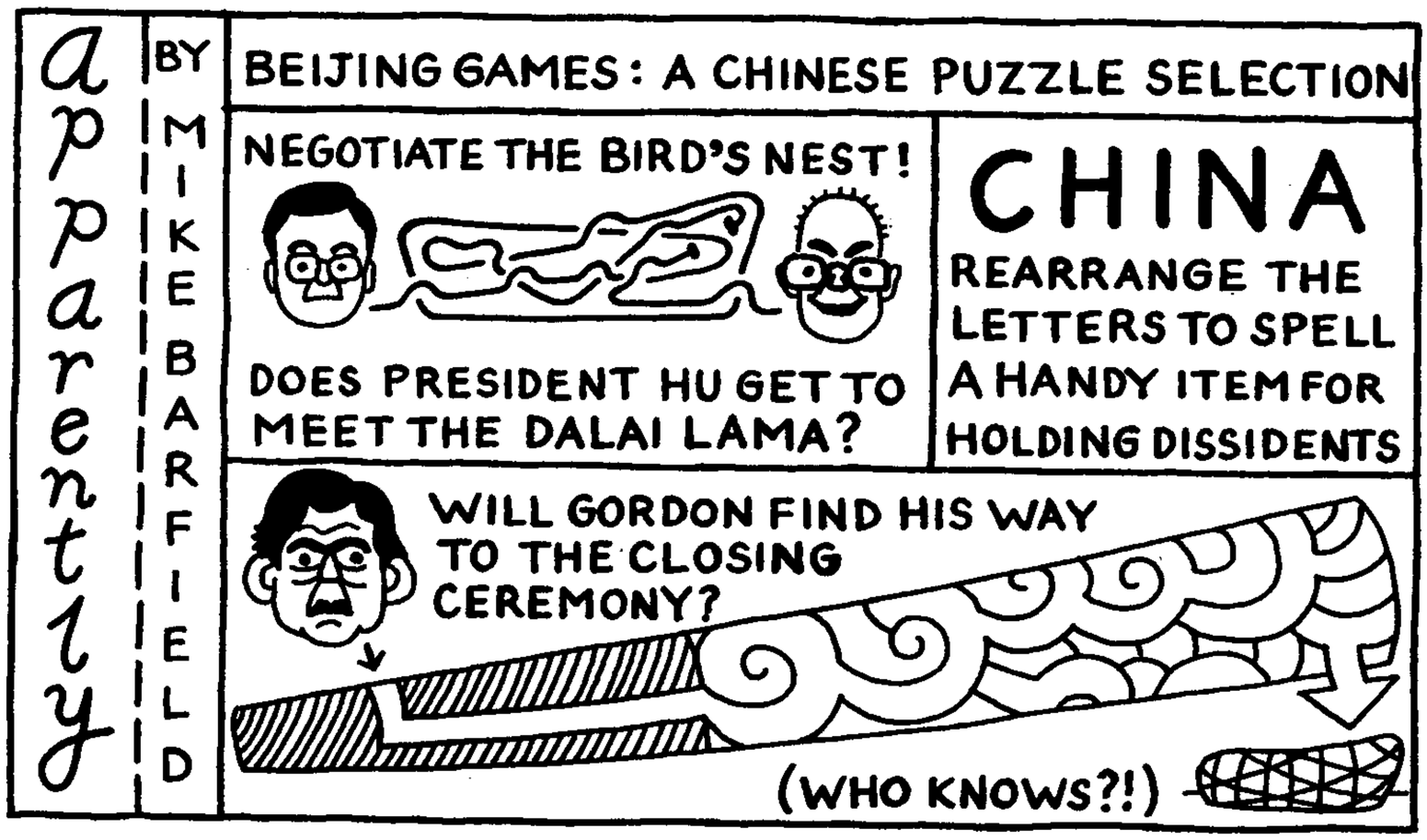
– ⭘ –

⭘ "It is a clear case of penis theft," Musa Abubakar told police in Gwagwalada (Nigeria), "and mine is not the only penis to have been stolen lately. Mohammed Ma'aji asked me to take him to Kasuwan Dare on my okada (motorcycle taxi), and on the way he squeezed me with his two legs from behind, and I suddenly felt dizzy and weak. Immediately I stopped to check my penis, but found nothing in my trouser. Then I noticed that the pigeon Ma'aji was carrying had changed from white to black, and I realised he had used a spiritual pigeon to steal my penis."

Ma'aji denied the allegation, stating that "I already have a penis. What am I going to do

with his penis? This white pigeon is for spiritual purposes. Abubakar probably lost his penis to a woman he met last night."

The Gwagwalada branch of the Motorcycle Transport Union later issued a statement, threatening to take legal action if Abubakar's penis was not returned within 24 hours. "We are fed up with reports of missing penises from members in our area," said chairman Malam Aminu Hussaini. *(New Nigerian on Sunday, 3/2/08. Spotter: Richard Simon)*


apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
BEIJING GAMES: A CHINESE PUZZLE SELECTION
NEGOTIATE THE BIRD'S NEST!
DOES PRESIDENT HU GET TO MEET THE DALAI LAMA?
CHINA
REARRANGE THE LETTERS TO SPELL A HANDY ITEM FOR HOLDING DISSIDENTS
WILL GORDON FIND HIS WAY TO THE CLOSING CEREMONY?
(WHO KNOWS?!)

# PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 20

## From the Bedside (formerly Desk) of the Supreme Leader

*(Solemn Music)*

**Comrades!**

It is with deep regret that we must announce that *our* beloved Supreme Leader is temporarily no longer in a position to carry out his duties.

He is indisposed and, although his condition is giving rise to considerable concern, we nevertheless sincerely hope that he will soon be restored to health, under the care of his expert and trusted spin doctors.

We confidently expect that within a very short time he will once again be taking up the reins of power as our Great Helmsman.

We call upon all comrades to rally round to support the Party at this critical juncture in its fortunes and to display unswerving loyalty to the memory of the Supreme Leader.

It would certainly not be helpful to dwell on the unfortunate events which led to the Leader's illness.

In no way can he be blamed for Comrade Darling's disastrous error in seeking to double the taxation of the proletariat and to redistribute it to the neo-Blairite debt-creating classes, ie the banking community.

Nor can Comrade Brown be blamed in any way for the so-called Summer of Discontent, caused by revanchist Trotskyite neo-Scargillist elements in the trade union movement determined to destroy the economic stability created by ten years of financial prudence under the direction of the sadly ailing former Chancellor.

Above all, no one can blame the Supreme Invalid for the disastrous fiasco of our national May Day festivities, when the British people inexplicably refused to join in the celebrations but showed their support for the reactionary Bullingdonian neo-Conservative claque by parading through the streets holding icons of their new supposed miracle worker St Boris.

It would certainly be unfair to blame Comrade Brown for the 'humiliating' rejection of Comrade Leninspart, for so long one of the Supreme Leader's closest and most loyal allies.

The blame for this outrageous abuse of the democratic process must be placed firmly at the door of the over-privileged suburbanite Kulak-class of Surbiton and Cheam, who thwarted the overwhelming popular will that Mayor Leninspart should be given a well-deserved third term of office.

And also sharing responsibility for this debacle must be those traitorous figures who have sought to exploit the Leader's temporary ill-health in order to advance their own unsavoury agendas. Let us name and shame them, beginning with the hated and universally-reviled Frank Field, the crypto-Fascist who for years has sought to undermine the leadership of the Party by being right about everything.

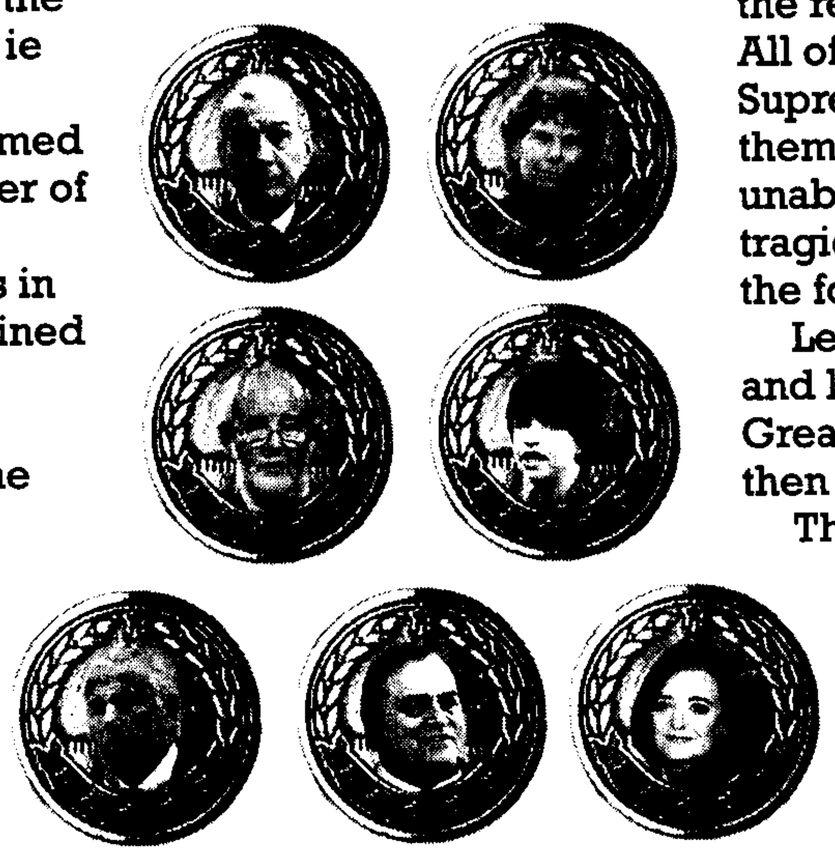
Next we hold up for universal odium the traitorous and subversive neo-Paisleyite Kate Hoey, whose willingness to betray the Party by declaring her allegiance to the sinister cult of St Boris constitutes one of the most shameless acts of disloyalty in the long history of our Great Movement.

Next on the list of dishonour comes the obese Blairite stooge, ex-Comrade Charles Clarke, a man so eaten up with envy and bitterness that he will even attack a Supreme Leader when he is ill and in no position to defend himelf.

Next, from the remotest recesses of the great British Union, we condemn the treasonable squeakings of former Comrade Wendy Alexander, as she defies the Supreme Leader in calling for a Tartan revolution which might enable her to set up a breakaway Scottish state as her own personal fiefdom.

Last, and by no means least, let us name the Gang of Three – the greedy and treacherous writers of Krypto-Blairite-Revisionist-Pseudo-History: ex-Comrade Lord Levy, ex-Comrade John Prescott and, worst of all, the reviled ex-Comrade Madame Blair. All of them have written lies about the Supreme Leader and chosen to publish them at the **very time** when he is unable to answer back, due to his being tragically temporarily incapacitated for the foreseeable future.

**ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE**



Let us be clear. Should the day come, and let us hope that it will not, that the Great Leader should be taken from us, then loyalty will be of the essence.

Those of us who have stood by the Supreme Leader, despite his debilitating nervous condition and his long succession of unfortunate misjudgements (none of which of course can be in any way attributed to himself), er... as we say, those of us who have shown unswerving dedication to the interests of the Party will demand that when the hour comes – as we hope it may not – the same loyalty should be shown by everyone to whichever one of us may shortly become the new Supreme Leader.

Signed,

Commissar D. Miliband
Commissar E. Miliband
Commissar E. Balls
Commissar D. Alexander (no relation)
Commissar J. Straw

and other Commissars who are too cowardly to append their signatures to this statement until the situation is clarified.

# EXCLUSIVE TO THE EYE

*Continuing our serialisation of Cherie Blair's sensational memoir* **Helping Myself**

*(Littlegordonbrown, £29.99)*

### Chapter 92
### Bundle Of Joy

WHAT a weekend it was! Tony and I were staying in Balmoral with the dreary old Queen when I discovered to my surprise that I had a little book on the way! Imagine – at my age!

Obviously I was thrilled for myself, but how would Tony take it? He had other things on his mind, like the terrible war with Gordon Brown.

However, when I broke the news, instead of looking worried his face broke into a huge smile. "How wonderful, darling!" he said. "I've always wanted some more money."

It was such a relief to know that he was going to support me through all the sleepless nights during the nine months of hard labour it took to produce the book.

### Chapter 93
### A Nasty Surprise

A VISIT to the publishers confirmed my worst fears! The book is going to be four months premature! My publisher is desperately worried that Gordon might be gone by the time our baby arrives, and then it might be too late!

Wouldn't that be awful? All that effort and no money at the end of it!

### Chapter 94
### The Delivery

UNFORTUNATELY a lot of other people are having books at the same time as me. John Prescott and Lord Levy have both had one already!

"Never mind, darling," said Tony. "Yours will be special!

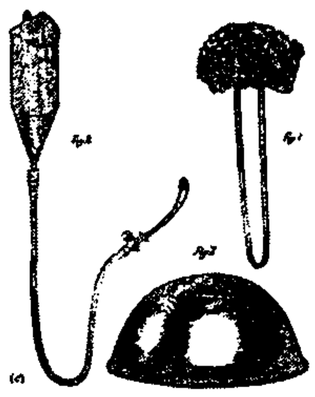
And so it was. The book came out and a lovely £500,000 non-bouncing cheque was delivered safely through the door of Number Ten Downing Street.

Tony was overjoyed. He picked it up and held it lovingly in his hands.

"You beautiful little cheque!" he said. "I'm going to take you for a little walk down to the bank right away."

*TOMORROW: How I always had the utmost respect for the melancholic, psychotic, fat Scots git Gordon Brown who ruined my husband's life. Oh yes, and how Carole Caplin made me really thin.*


# New From Gnome



## THE CHERIE BLAIR CONTRACEPTION KIT

### *'THE BALMORAL'*

***At last, family planning made easy!***

Simply leave this handy device at home (in drawer or under bed) and... hey presto, bun's in the oven!

*As approved by His Holiness The Pope!!*

## THE CHERIE BLAIR-BRUSH

Yes – you can look 20 years younger thanks to this miracle of cosmetic technology. Get rid of unwanted lines, shadows, eyes, ears, nose, facts, etc in a flash!


# ANT AND DEC SCOOP NEW AWARD

by Our Showbiz Staff **Angela Ripoff**

TOP entertainment duo, Ant and Dec (Anthony Anteater and Declan McPartwork) were last night honoured with another coveted comedy award 'The Most Laughable Excuse For A TV Scam In The History Of Broadcasting'.

Presented by singer Robber Williams, the award is only given to someone who, in the judges' opinion, should be put in jail. *(Is this right? Ed.)*

Said Robber, "Ant and Dec's excuse that they knew nothing about anything was absolutely hilarious. I have never heard anything so funny in my life."

However, ITV chairman Michael Greed was furious not to win the award himself.

Critics had hailed his amusing

**Ant or Dec and Dec or Ant**

performance in not sacking anyone over ITV's phone-line scams. They felt that Greed deserved the prestious award and he agreed.

"My line about zero tolerance was much funnier than Ant and Dec's," said Greed. "This prize has clearly been rigged."

Inspector Knacker meanwhile announced that no further action would be taken against Messrs Ant and Dec for the fraud, on the grounds that they did not know which Geordie funster was which – and did not want to shoot the wrong one.

## *WEST END FLOP!*

# GONE WITH THE WINDBAG

SET against the backdrop of Labour's Civil War, this epic saga of jealousy and revenge tells of the doomed triangular relationship between **Scarlett O'Blara, Cashley Blair** and **Rhedd Brown**.

Featuring the great Southern hit songs:

*Gordon Brown's Body Lies A-Mouldering In The Grave*

*Swannee (We're all Going Down The)*

*Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory Of The Coming Of Lord Levy*

*Tory Tory Halleluia!*

**EYE RATING: Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z**

## FILM PICK

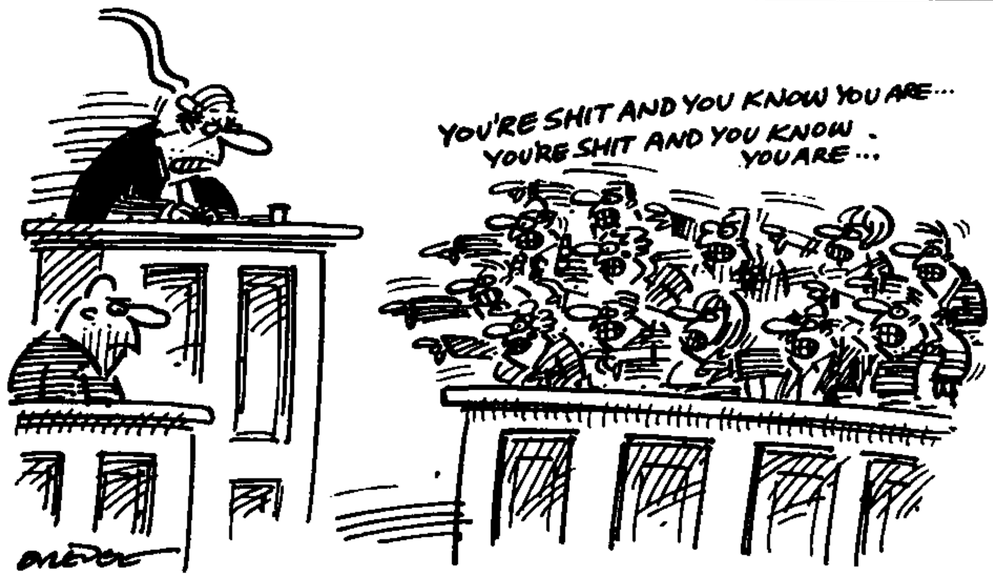
### The Go-Between

TRAGIC story of large boy caught up in ill-fated romance set in turn-of-the-century England.

John Prescott is the go-between charged with bringing together posh Tony and not-quite-so-posh Gordon. Will it all end horribly? Yes.

### Indiana Jones And The Stairlift of Stannah

OAP Indie returns to face his toughest challenge – can he get up the stairs to go to the toilet?




*"Members of the jury – have you reached a verdict on which you are all agreed?"*

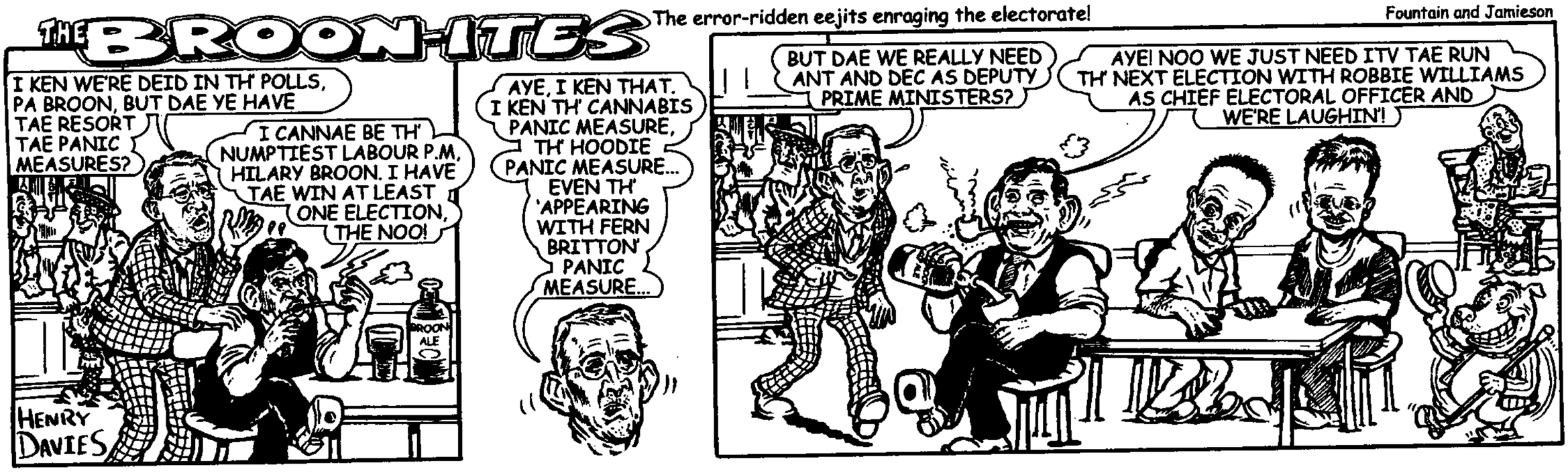
# Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

HOORAH! I'VE GIVEN GORDON A DAMN GOOD THRASHING!!!
BULLY FOR YOU, DAVE!
YAROO!
IT WAS A POSHOVER!
IT'S A NEW ERA - ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO PRETEND TO BE AN OIK ANY MORE
ETON WALL
SNOOTY RULES OK O.E.!
TOP HATS OFF TO US!!!
AND EVERYONE LOVES NEW-LOOK BORIS THE EX-MENACE!
I'M TOFF ON CRIME, TOFF ON THE CAUSES OF CRIKEY!
OO-ER, I FEAR HE COULD BE A MENACE TO ME, EH, READERS?

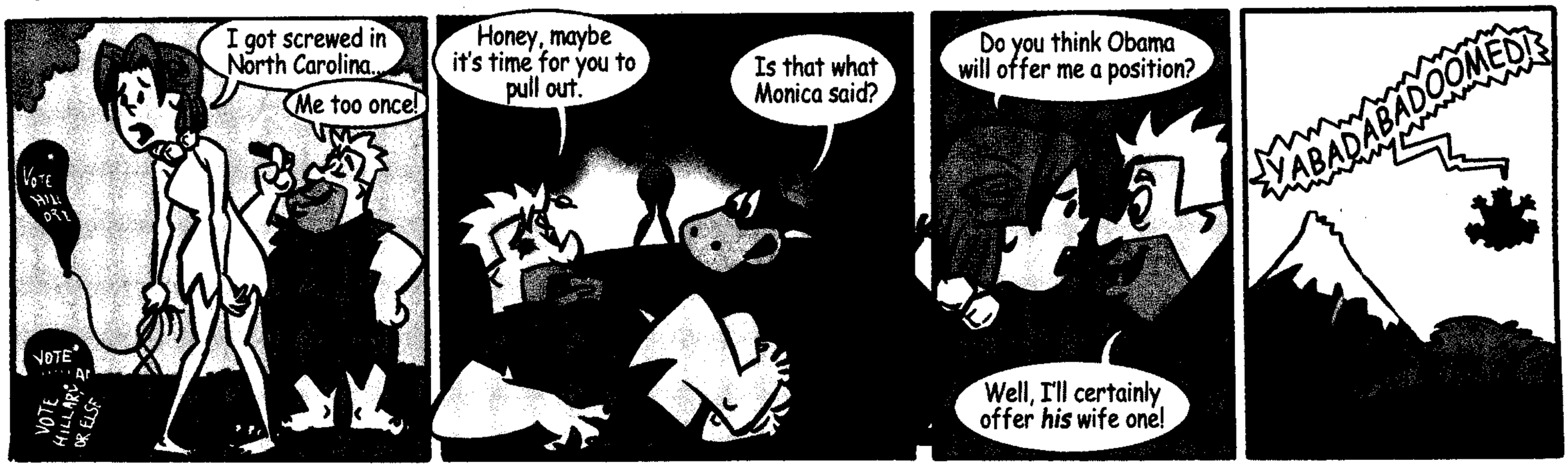
## THE BROON-ITES

The error-ridden eejits enraging the electorate!

Fountain and Jamieson

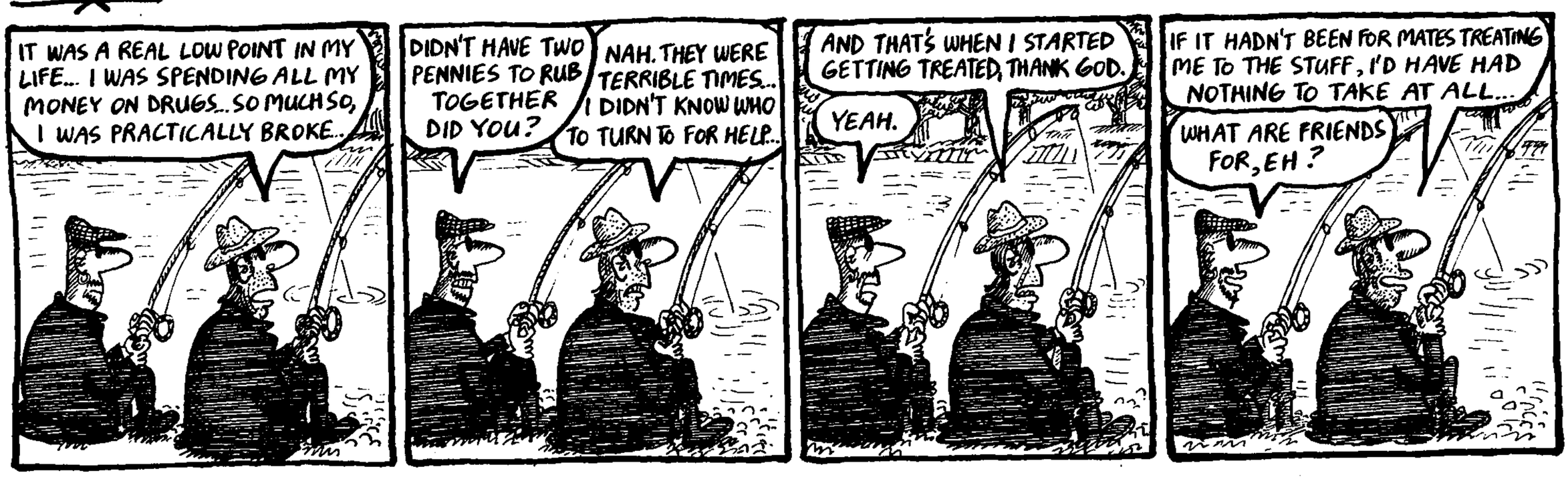

I KEN WE'RE DEID IN TH' POLLS, PA BROON, BUT DAE YE HAVE TAE RESORT TAE PANIC MEASURES?
I CANNAE BE TH' NUMPTIEST LABOUR P.M, HILARY BROON. I HAVE TAE WIN AT LEAST ONE ELECTION, THE NOO!
BROON ALE
HENRY DAVIES
AYE, I KEN THAT. I KEN TH' CANNABIS PANIC MEASURE, TH' HOODIE PANIC MEASURE... EVEN TH' 'APPEARING WITH FERN BRITTON' PANIC MEASURE...
BUT DAE WE REALLY NEED ANT AND DEC AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS?
AYE! NOO WE JUST NEED ITV TAE RUN TH' NEXT ELECTION WITH ROBBIE WILLIAMS AS CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER AND WE'RE LAUGHIN'!

## MEET THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY


I got screwed in North Carolina...
Me too once!
VOTE HILL OFF
VOTE
VOTE HILLARY OR ELSE
Honey, maybe it's time for you to pull out.
Is that what Monica said?
Do you think Obama will offer me a position?
Well, I'll certainly offer his wife one!
YABADABADOOMED!

## Celeb

LIGGER


IT WAS A REAL LOW POINT IN MY LIFE... I WAS SPENDING ALL MY MONEY ON DRUGS... SO MUCH SO, I WAS PRACTICALLY BROKE...
DIDN'T HAVE TWO PENNIES TO RUB TOGETHER DID YOU?
NAH. THEY WERE TERRIBLE TIMES... I DIDN'T KNOW WHO TO TURN TO FOR HELP...
AND THAT'S WHEN I STARTED GETTING TREATED, THANK GOD.
YEAH.
IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR MATES TREATING ME TO THE STUFF, I'D HAVE HAD NOTHING TO TAKE AT ALL...
WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR, EH?

# A Dictionary of the English Language

## Dr Boris Johnson

**Buffoon** statesman-like figure capable of occupying the highest civic office

**Cripes** exclamation expressing disbelief, as in 'Cripes, I never thought I'd win'

**Guppy** (a) species of fish; b) frightful crook educated at Eton and one-time close friend of the lexicographer

**Spectator** magazine providing useful employment for hacks hired to assemble the pages while the editor is enjoying a long lunch with his ladyfriend

**Legover** vulgar expression referring to pleasurable amorous diversions *(see entry above)*

**Cycle lane** special lane on the highway designed for the exclusive use of important political figures such as myself and my friend 'Oofy' Cameron

**Petronella** antique dance of the type a trusting wife might be led by an unfaithful husband

**Cripes** expression of disbelief used by such a husband when his amorous exploits are revealed to the world's newsmen *(see above passion)*

*(That's enough dictionary. Ed.)*

*"He who is tired of being Mayor of London is ready to become Prime Minister"*

The Wit and Wisdom of Dr Boris

## EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS


■ **Stanley Johnson** on what it's like being Boris's Dad **2**

■ **Rachel Johnson** on what it's like being Boris's sister and Stanley's daughter **3**

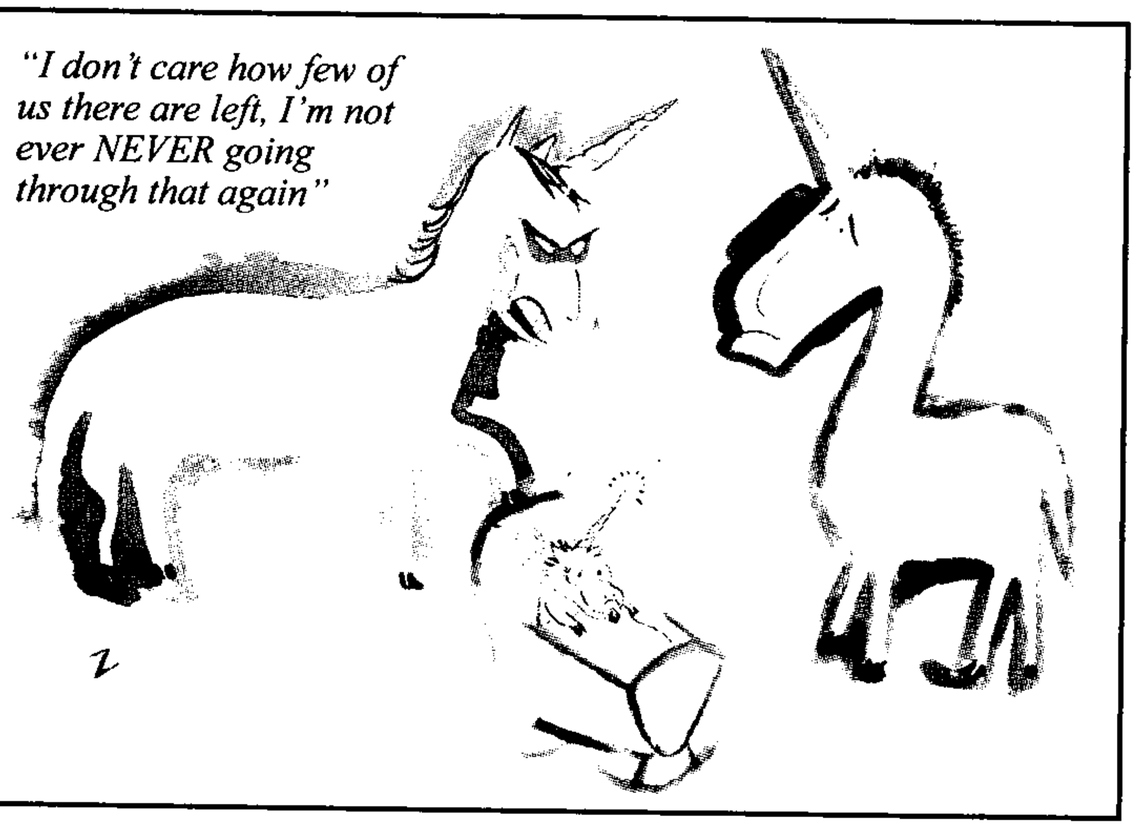
■ **Boris Johnson** on what it's like being written about by sister Rachel and father Stanley **4**

■ **Stanley Johnson** on what it's like to be written about because you are writing about your son Boris and daughter Rachel **5**

■ **Rachel Johnson** on what it's like always being asked to write about Boris rather than discuss your new novel "Being Boris's Sister" by Boris's sister (Johnson and Johnson £12.99) **6**

■ **Ulrika Johnson** on what it's like being asked to write about what it's like to be Boris's sister and Stanley's son and, of course, Rachel's sister and Marina's brother-in-law and Milo's uncle, even though you are not related to any of them. *(That's enough Johnsons. Ed.)* **94**


*"I don't care how few of us there are left, I'm not ever NEVER going through that again"*



# Mr Boris Johnson
## An Apology

**IN COMMON with all other newspapers, we may have carried a number of articles in recent weeks suggesting that Mr Boris Johnson was in some way a "joke figure", a clown and buffoon whose natural arena was the trivial television quiz programme rather than the lofty and serious heights of major public office.**

**Headlines such as "Gaffe-Prone Boris Does It Again", "Who's Barmy Boris Insulted This Time?" or "Bonking Boris's Pyramid Of Piffle" may have conveyed the impression that we regarded Mr Johnson as an embarrassing political lighweight with as much chance of becoming Mayor of London as a pig might have of taking off from the new runway at Heathrow Aiport.**

**We now accept that there was not a jot or scintilla of truth to substantiate these unfounded and insulting allegations. We are happy to make it clear that Mr Johnson is in fact an astonishingly intelligent and capable figure, superbly fitted to hold down one of the most taxing and responsible jobs in the world, and with an exhaustive grasp of the wide range of problems confronting Londoners today.**

**We would like to offer our unreserved apologies for our earlier reports, and for any distress they may have caused Mr Johnson, members of his family, or his casual sexual partners.**

# Yes, It's All New Boring Johnson Cockney Rhyming Slang

| | |
|---|---|
| **Whistle and Flute** | Sensible Suit |
| **Apple and Pear** | Tidy Hair |
| **Trouble and Strife** | Devoted to Wife |
| **Tea Leaf** | Youth Crime Chief |
| **Frog and Toad** | Heavy Workload |
| **J Arthur Rank** | Transport Think Tank |
| **Rub-a-Dub-Dub** | London's Finances Devolved But Accountable to a Central Economic Hub |

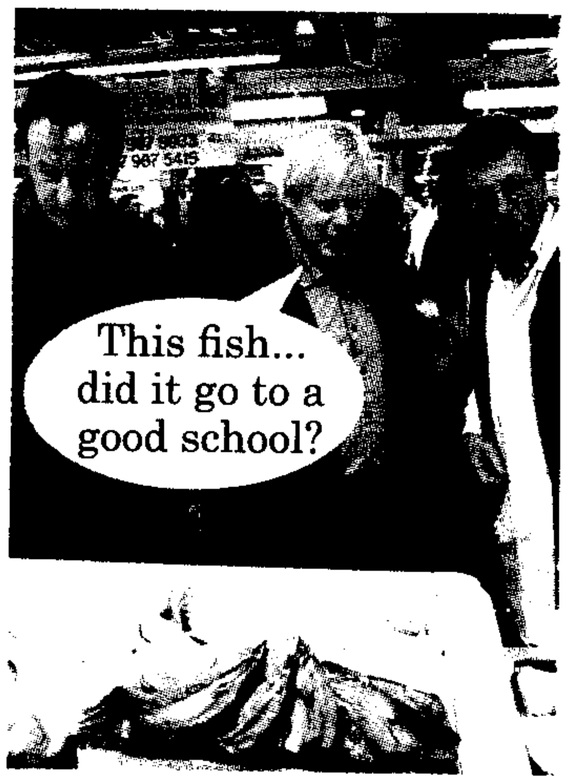
*(That's enough, Ed)*

# BORIS IN BOOZE BAN SHOCK

IN ONE of his first moves as London Mayor, Boris Johnson has announced a total ban on booze in the Mayor's office.

"I can't move in here for empty whisky bottles and there's no telling what sort of anti-social behaviour – such as pushing journalists downstairs – results from such chronic alcohol consumption," said Boris *(cont. p. 94)*

# TORY REVIVAL



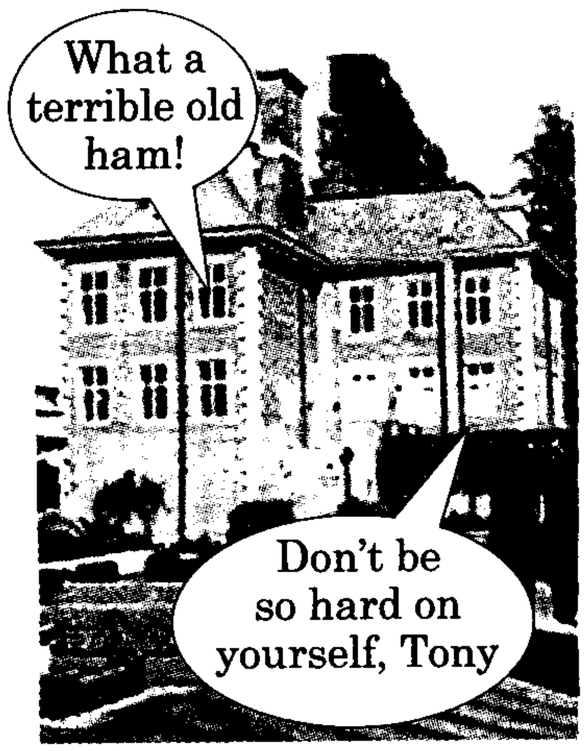
# LABOUR FIGHTBACK BEGINS

**THE LABOUR Government has begun the fight-back after its record drubbing at the local elections, with senior Number 10 sources confirming that it would be ditching the unpopular Rubbish Prime Minister.**

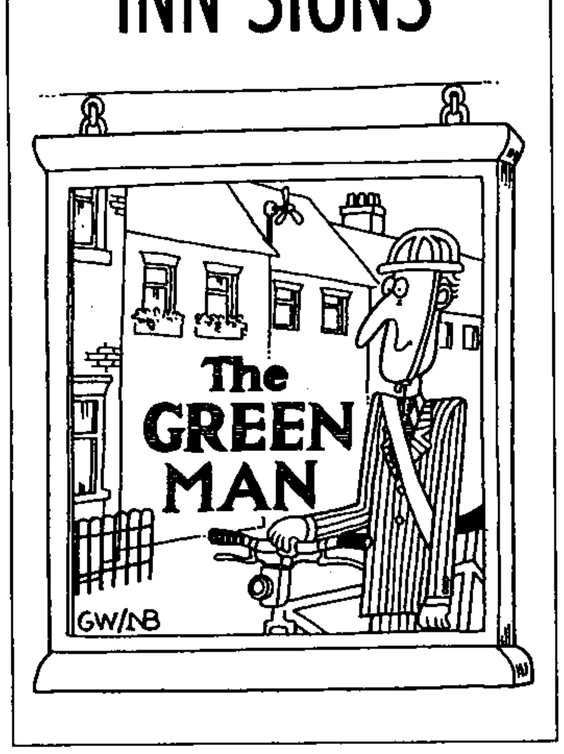
"When we bought in the Rubbish Prime Minister we thought we could simply recycle an old chancellor, but that clearly isn't the case.

"We need to show that we're listening to the voters by ditching this Rubbish Prime Minister before the stink the length and breadth of the country grows any worse," said all *(cont. p. 94.)*

# BLAIR BUYS GIELGUD'S HOUSE



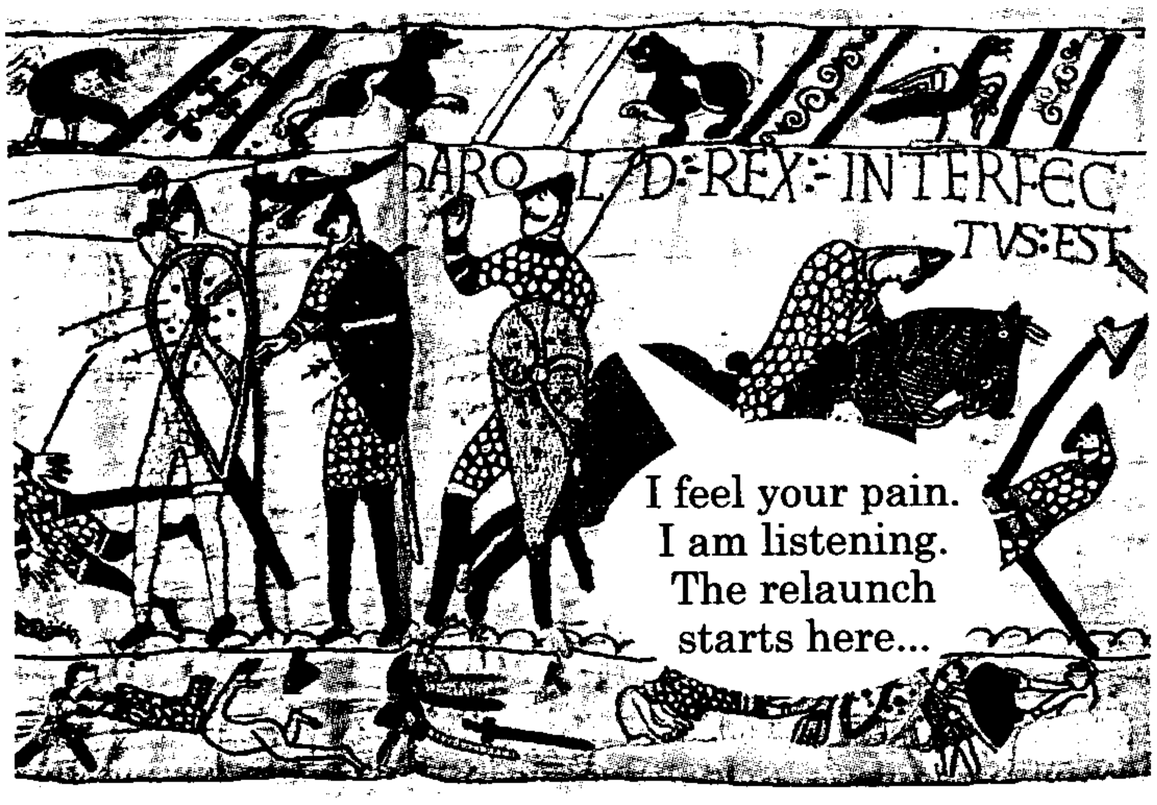

# MODERN INN SIGNS




# THAT NEW ITALIAN CABINET IN FULL

**Prime Minister:** Signor Silvio Berlusconi
**Minister for Finance:** Signor Silvio Berlusconi
**Minister for Justice:** Signor Silvio Berlusconi
**Minister for Train Punctuality:** Signor Benito Mussolini
**Minister for Culture:** Signora Pornella Scorchio
**Minister for Women:** Signora Tutsi-Frutsi Iceacreama
**Minister Without Portfolio:** Signor Silvio Berlusconi
**Minister Without Trousers:** Signor Silvio Berlusconi
*(That's enough Cabinet. Ed.)*

# LEADER SUFFERS TERRIBLE DEFEAT



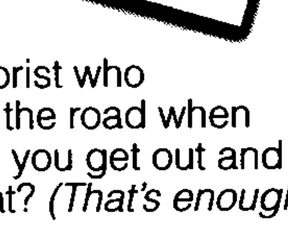
## Fleet Street's No.1 Super Delegate GLENDA SLAGG ELECTION SPECIAL

**■ HATS OFF to Hillary, the gal with guts who won't give up!?! Okay, so she's trailing behind Obama, but that's no reason to throw in the towel!!?! The women of the world will never forgive America if they don't take their chance to put a woman in the most powerful job on the planet!!??! So come on you gals, from Gettysburg to Guantanamo Bay, from New Mexico to New Dworkin, and put your cross next to this feisty feminist who doesn't know when she's beat!!!**

■ HILLARY CLINTON – arencha-sickofher?!!?? Let's face it, honey, you're over the hillary (geddit??!??). Why doncha just pack it in right now and admit Obama's got you on the ropes and is heading for the White House?!! And quite right!! It's high time for a black man to be given the most powerful job on the planet – not some 60-year-old housewife with a sex-crazed hubby?!? So come on you Afro-Americans, from Alabama to Arkansas, from Alcatraz to Albuquerque, and put your cross next to the sexy senator who knows he's got has-been Hillary beat!!???!! *(You're fired. Ed.)*

## Those New Up-To-Date Driving Skills Learner Drivers Will Have To Master Before Passing Their Test

- When overtaking in the slow lane, how loudly should you be talking on your mobile phone?
- Is "f***ing wanker" the correct term of abuse to hurl at someone who dares to drive only at the speed limit in the fast lane?
- How many cans of lager should you hurl from the driver's window at grannies using pedestrian crossings?
- How long should you tailgate another motorist who dared 'beep' you for almost forcing them off the road when you changed lanes without signalling before you get out and smash in their back lights with a baseball bat? *(That's enough up-to-date driving skills. Ed.)*



*"I didn't know what to do... he's still waiting to get through to a call centre"*

# GIANT SCULPTURE TO BE ERECTED IN SOUTH

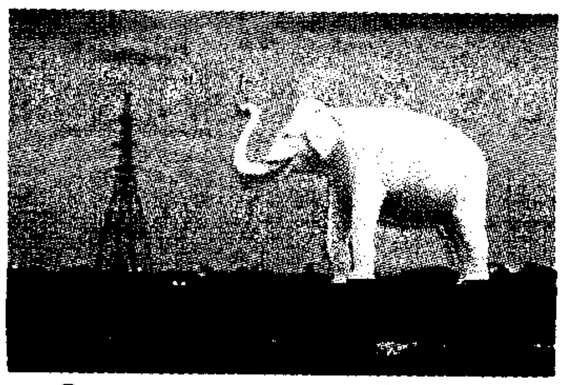
by Our Arts Staff **Brian R. Sewell**

A 500FT-high white elephant is to be constructed in a field in Kent.

"The Elephant of the South will be the answer to the Angel of the North," said Turner prize-winning sculptor Wally Bollinger.

### Stupid Kent

"I was inspired by the Millennium Dome," he said, "a terrific waste of money that no one likes."



**Computer-generated image of how the Elephant of the South will look.**

**One floor below Putin's office**

# BURMA CYCLONE TRAGEDY

**By Our Disaster Staff Phil Graves**

**THE BURMESE government say it's a tragedy that 60,000 of it's countrymen have died at the hands of Cyclone Nargis.**

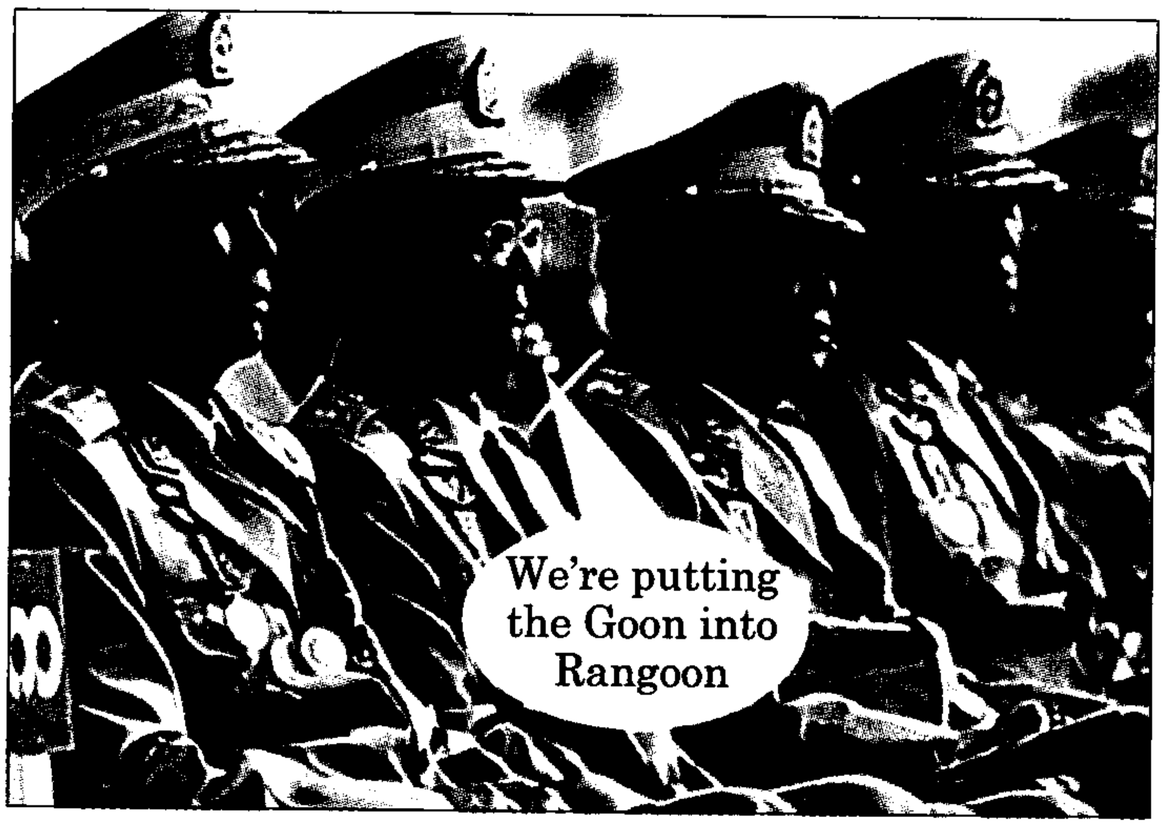
"These people should have course have died long lingering deaths in state-run concentration camps at our hands" said a furious government spokesman.

The Burmese government has meanwhile asked the international community for urgently needed weapons, following the devastation wreaked by Nargis.

"We urgently need semi-automatic weapons, land mines, stun-guns, armoured grenade launchers and intercontinental missiles to help our people recover from this terrible tragedy," said a senior Burmese general.

### Those Burmese Government Plans To Deal With Cyclone Threat In Future

- Place all cyclones under indefinite house arrest.
- Err...
- That's it.




# the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

ANOTHER SEASON OVER AND THE PREMIER LEAGUE PROVES THAT IT'S NOT ONLY THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD...
MAN UTD WIN THE PREMIER LEAGUE
YAWN
PREMIER LEAGUE TABLE
MAN U 87
CHELSEA 85
ARSENAL 83
L'POOL 76
THE REST
WHO CARES?
BUT ALSO THE SMALLEST!

# ZIMBABWE RECOUNT

# POETRY CORNER

**Lines Written On The 60th Anniversary Of The State Of Israel**

So. Happy birthday to
The State of Israel.

You are 60
Years old.

Shalom. That is your
Catchphrase.

Or rather it isn't,
Because it means
Peace.

E.J. Thribbutz (17½)

*"I'm worried... it's from Ahmejinedad"*

# CANNABIS ✷ RECLASSIFICATION STORM GROWS

by Our Drugs Staff **Marljuana Frostrup and Gunter Grass**

**THE cannabis debate is to be recategorised as Z-Z-Z *(Dangerously Tedious)*.**

New research has shown that reading stories about reclassification of marijuana can induce instant drowsiness and nausea, eventually leading to death by boredom. Have your say on the Great Debate by logging onto www.zzz.co.uk

# IS THIS THE MOST EVIL COUNTRY IN THE WORLD?

## asks leading historian Max Hastings

***(with additional material from Professor Andrew Roberts)***

**MAKE no mistake. This is not the first time that events in Austria have sickened and affronted the conscience of the entire civilised world.**

We have all been appalled and horrified by the revelations of Herr Fritzl's monstrous and subhuman behaviour towards his family.

But this is only the latest example of a long succession of infamous and degrading crimes committed down the ages by the people of this tiny Alpine hellhole.

### Mozart

For let's be clear. We have all wept at the *Sound of Music*. We have danced across those flower-strewn meadows to the lilting melodies of Johann Strauss.

But beneath the folksy, dirndl-clad facade of the *Merry Widow* lurks a bottomless pit of evil that makes *Dante's Inferno* look like a West end night out.

For was it not in this self-same idyllic setting that the infant Adolf Hitler first saw the light of day, and the cancer of Nazism began to grow at the soft underbelly of Europe, resulting in the cataclysm that was to be World War Two *(see my books)*.

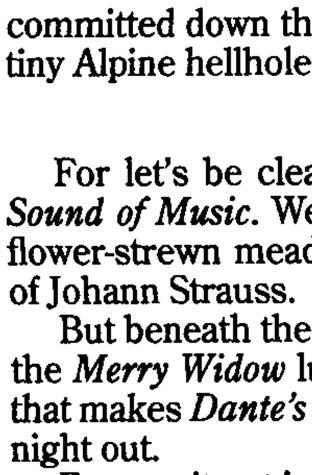
Today Austrians are stunned as they ask themselves the question – where did we go wrong?

"Why are we Austrians so rotten that our little once-proud nation has become the pariah of the civilised world?"

### Harry Lime

First Hitler, now Fritzl, the monster of wherever it is *(subs, please fill in name of village)*.

And who will be the next name to rise from the foetid swamps of this accursed backwater of Europe, to write a new chapter in the book of infamy that is *(cont. p. 94.)*




# An Open Letter To Peaches Geldof

Dear Peaches,

Like many concerned columnists, I have read about your recent antics with mounting alarm. The drinks, the drugs, the parties, the boyfriends – it is all too reminiscent of your poor late mother whom I nearly met once. I watched her too fighting a losing battle with her inner demons, taking a downward spiral to self-destruction and I remember clearly writing an open letter to her as well.

Peaches, I've seen your father on television, so I know exactly what he must be going through, as he watches helplessly an eerie replay of the past unwinding before his sad eyes.

So let me make this plea to you, Peaches, woman to woman: *please, please, please* keep on getting drunk, stoned and behaving badly, so that I and others will have something to write about.

For God's sake, don't stop before it's too late! And with any luck you will heed this message and become a role model for your siblings, so that I can write about them going off the rails as well.

Your caring friend,

***Polly***

*© P. Filler 2008*

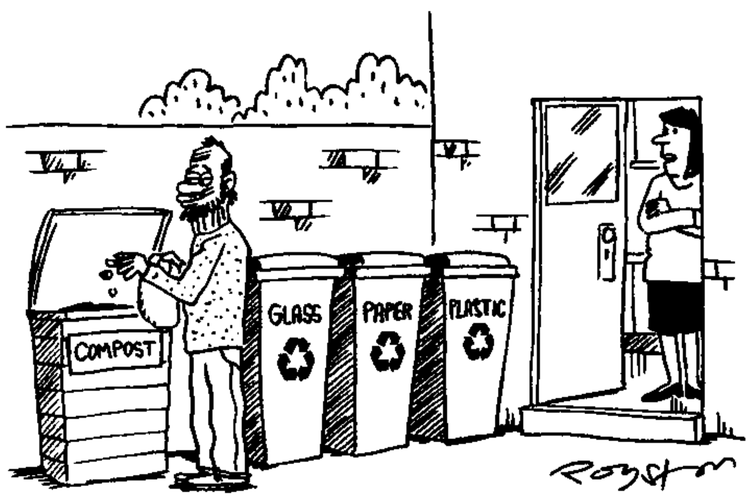
# Under The Weather Forecast

**Winehouse:** Troubled. Overcast. Heavy falls likely. Outlook dark.

**Gazza:** Troubled. Overcast. Fog descending. Mist likely to persist. Deep depression. Outlook unchanged.

**Britney:** Troubled. Low front. Powdery snow. Outlook stormy.

**Doherty:** Troubled. Bright patches but windy, returning to gale later *(surely 'jail'? Ed.)*




*"I worry that the warm glow from your sense of smug self-satisfaction could be harming the environment"*

# From The Message Boards

**Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...**

### CCTV 'Has Little Effect'

Police say they are preventing people from taking pictures in public spaces in case their motives are undesirable, eg, robbery, paedophilia, terrorism. This is surely the very antithesis of the freedom for which our forefathers fought, and I find it sad that decent, respectable Britons are viewed with suspicion. To add insult to injury, the vast majority of amateur photographers are in fact involved in crime prevention. I spend many hours keeping an eye on suspicious stranger and familiar ne'er-do-well alike, and have a sizable "database" of high-quality images. When the authorities' fuzzy CCTV proves inadequate to secure convictions, it is to public-spirited citizens like myself that they will turn. – ***Public_Spirited_Citizen***

**1949:** Eric Arthur Blair's vision of a future Britain in which cameras monitor our every move.
**1997:** Anthony Charles Lynton Blair builds surveillance state with five million cameras.
**2008:** Ian Warwick Blair's Metropolitan Police denounce CCTV as an "utter fiasco".
Blair's Britain: brave new world to laughing stock in half a century.
– ***Tonbridge_Tax-payer***

they say cctv dont work so y do ppl complane – my bike was stolen under a camra an the camra didn't work? well if the camra dont work then how do they no it wz stolen? – ***Chatham_87***

### Shakespeare Rewritten In 'Yoofspeak'

Wake me up please I must, be, having a night-mayor? Shakespear? More "like" iliterate, gangsta rap? As a English teacher I dispair. – ***Graham_"Grange"_Hill***

### Prince Harry Awarded Afghanistan Medal

Tippycle of bottle-er browns Britain! he spend's milions on benifit's for every tom's dick and harry ☹ BUT... hero harry and r boy's get a afganistan meddle not even a proper British 1 – ***Pompey_Lad***

wiv u 110 persent pompy lad its the same story with nu labour mp's (stand's for muppets) ☺ banning the burkhas in school's!! this brave regiment risk ther life for r country and cant get a pension and now they cant visit schools just becus u cant see there face's in ther uniform!! ☻ – ***Wee_Billy_Dunn***

### Sir Alan Sugar Demands Tough Policing In 'Broken Britain'

Spot on, Sir Alan. Or as Chelsea police would say: you're fired! ☺ – ***Make_My_Day***

# DIARY

LORD LEVY

I decided to take Tony's mind off the troubles in Iraq by holding a series of glittering fundraising dinners for New Labour's most wealthy and glamorous supporters.

It certainly did the trick. They were all there – Cilla, Mick Hucknall, Victoria (Beckham), top actor Alan Rickman and many others worth mentioning. It was just like being on the Jarrow march. At one point we were even talking to top supermodel Elle Macpherson and heart-throb Robbie Williams at the same time!

"This certainly beats bombing Iraq!" I said to Tony.

"Iraq?" said Tony. "Remind me?"

Robbie Williams became a frequent visitor to Number 10 in the darkest days of the Iraq war. He'd never fail to cheer Tony up. Joining in on his acoustic guitar while Robbie sang "Let Me Entertain You" was a sure way for Tony to put all that bombing behind him.

Tony always made a point of changing into "casual wear" – well-pressed blue jeans and maybe a check shirt with a spotted kerchief round his neck – before the arrival of Robbie. "We don't want him to think I'm an old fuddy-duddy, Michael, now do we?" he explained.

Tony would get very nervous before Robbie's arrival, endlessly adjusting and readjusting his spotted kerchief. Often he would start fiddling with the spurs of his cowboy boots. It was a bit of a nervous tic. "You don't think Robbie might find these too... showy, Michael?" he'd ask plaintively. I'd tell him that, no, Robbie had assured me he really admired Tony's spurs. This wasn't exactly true – to be honest, he'd never mentioned them – but it gave Tony a tremendous confidence-boost to hear me say it, and that's very important for any Prime Minister up to his neck in a long, drawn-out war.

The word was going round that my relationship with the Blairs was getting a bit too cosy, so I arranged to discuss the matter with Cherie and Tony in the small private dining room at Wilton's, the exclusive Jermyn Street restaurant.

New Labour politicians saw my relationship with Tony as useful in conveying messages they felt were important but often unheard, so I arrived at Wilton's with quite a few special requests in my pocket.

"This one's from Gordon," I said, pulling it out before the arrival of our Prawn Cocktails. "He wonders, Tony, exactly when you'll be ready to leave Number 10, as per the gentlemen's agreement?"

"Next!" said Tony, as Cherie placed a handful of the restaurant's bread-rolls into her bag for safekeeping.

"Oh, yes. Peter Mandelson says he's dying to meet Robbie Williams, he's his number one fan. And here's a request from Prescott: might he be allowed to bring a packed lunch to Cabinet?"

As we went through the messages ("Robin says he's stuck up a mountain and can't get down – oh, no, that's an old one"), I could see Tony's mind wandering, so I tried to bring him back to earth with a bump.

"People are saying, Tony, that you are doing everything with an eye to the next day's media coverage," I said, tactfully as I could.

I could see Tony thinking long and hard. "That calls for a a major new initiative, Michael. We must let them know I'm doing something for the long-term good of the country," he said. "I'll get Alistair to put the word around." He looked at his watch. "We should be just in time for tomorrow's papers."

While he was sorting it out on his Blackberry, Cherie removed the little umbrellas from our cocktails and popped them into her handbag. "They're complimentary," she explained.

The issue was delicate and deeply personal: Cherie's friend and lifestyle coach Carole Caplin.

I had first met Carole at a private dinner for Tony and Cherie in an Islington restaurant shortly after the 1997 Election victory. Others there included top TV host Dale Winton, Sir Jimmy Savile and Bee Gee Robin Gibb, but I remember Carole well because she was the only woman round the table wearing a bikini.

She was charming and vivacious, arriving with a selection of exotic oils and unguents and offering to relax each one of us in turn while we waited for our main courses to arrive. Her then boyfriend, Peter Foster, came too. He was down the other end of the table, trying to interest Cherie in his top-of-the-range property portfolio.

Carole and Peter made a lovely couple. But now with increasingly worrisome rumours about Carole's role, a key member of Tony's Number 10 team asked me to use my personal relationship with the PM to urge 'distance'. Gossips were suggesting that Carole was making more and more frequent visits to Chequers to give an increasingly stressed Prime Minister long massages. Incidentally, I do not approve of such tittle-tattle, and would never ever pass it on.

I was thus deeply uncomfortable about raising the issue with Tony. I told him there was a real danger that it might get into the press, or – worse – leak out in the tell-tale autobiography of some embittered former associate.

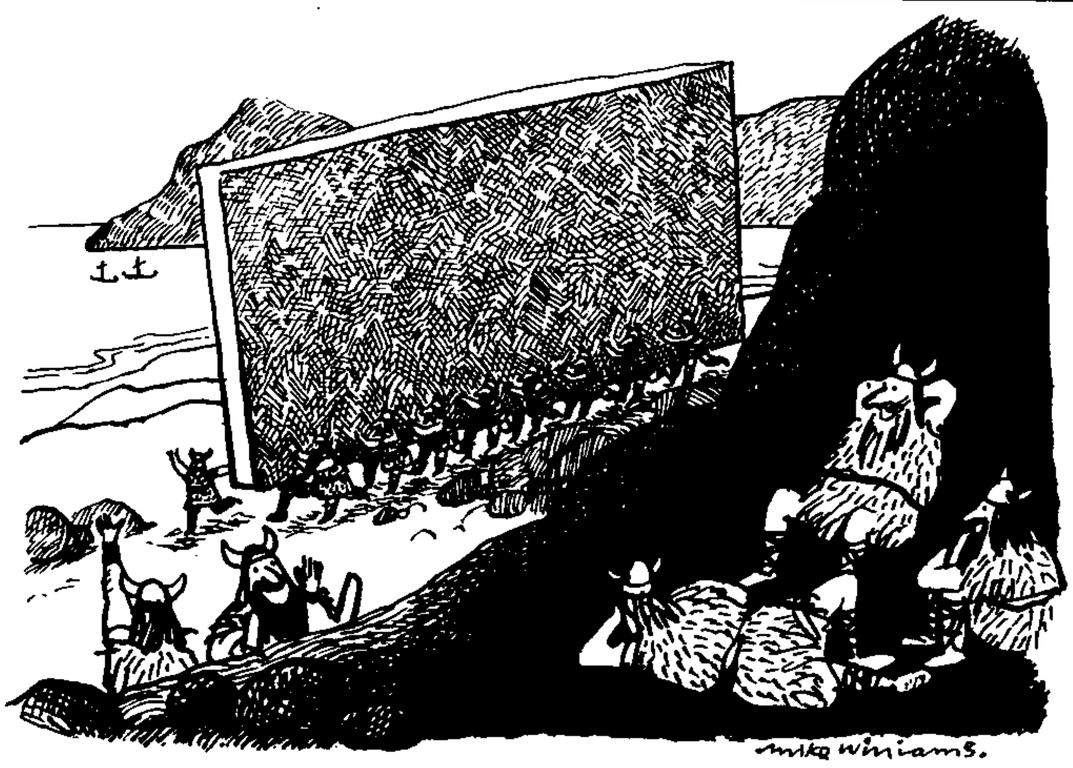
"Don't get me wrong, Tony, I have an awful lot of time for Carole," I said, "But a man of your standing doesn't want a little minx like that giving him a massage. If you want someone to give you a relaxing, all-over mind-and-body massage, Tony, then – voila! – look no further."

Sadly, at that very moment Tony remembered an urgent appointment with a very important world leader. So I will, alas, never know what he would have replied, though I feel sure it would have been very positive.

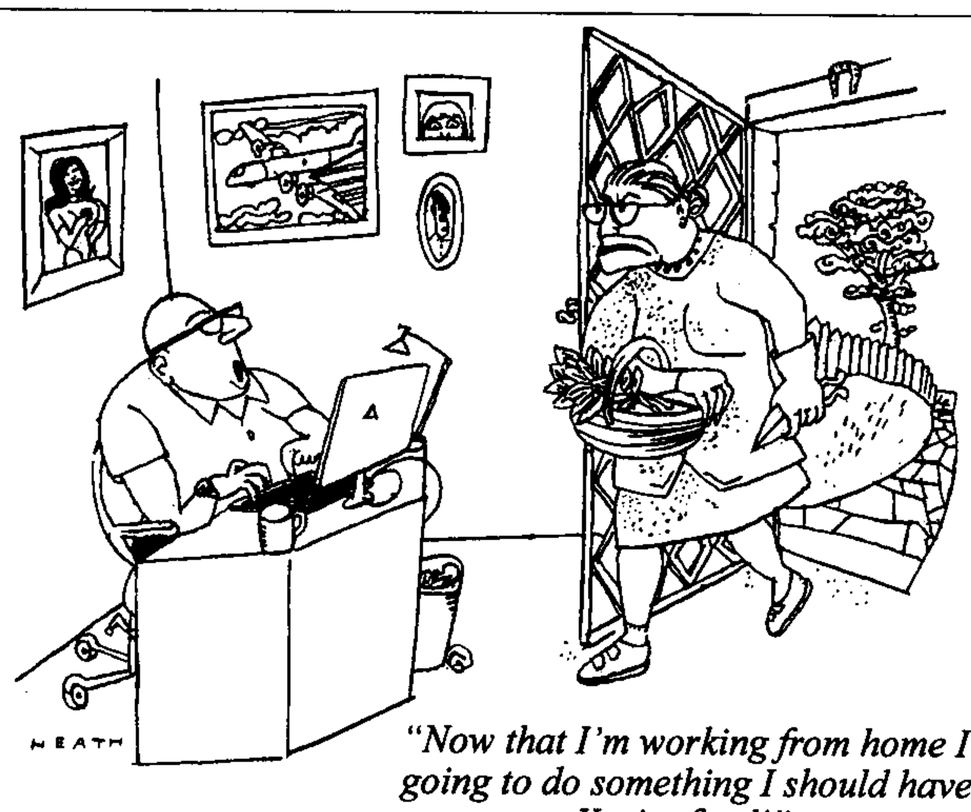
In June, 2006, the Downing Street doormat had to be taken away for cleaning. I felt immensely privileged when Tony asked me to take its place. So I lay down to lie down as flat as I possibly could between the portals of that historic landmark building and thereby acted as a convenient place for VIPs and glamorous superstars from all over the world to pursue the New Labour vision. After a week undertaking this valuable work, I was delighted to receive a signed letter on Downing Street notepaper from one of Tony's senior aides. The letter thanked me for my first-rate service as a doormat before asking me to remove myself at my earliest convenience, one further service which, I need hardly add, I felt hugely honoured to undertake.

*As told to*

CRAIG BROWN




*"Erik! Our new ship has arrived from Ikeaborg!"*

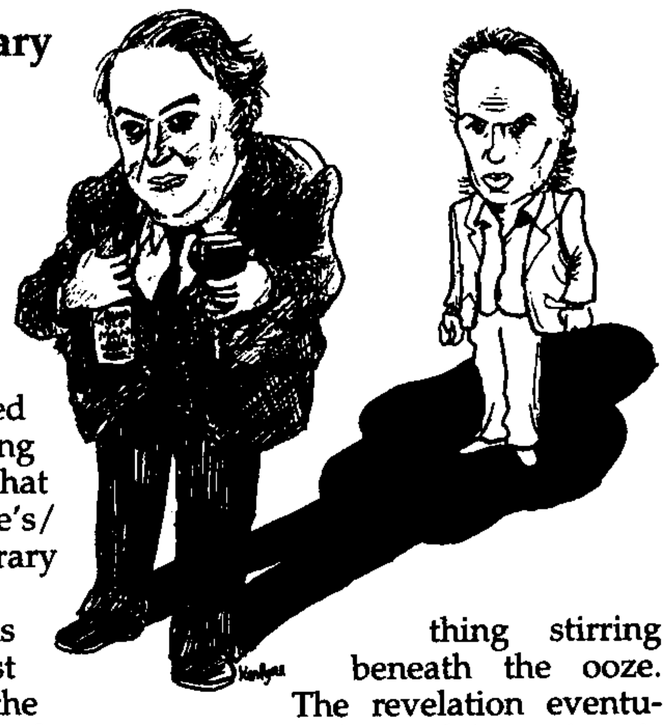



*"Now that I'm working from home I'm going to do something I should have done years ago. You're fired!"*

# Literary Review

## The son also sets

**Amis & Son: Two Literary Generations**
Neil Powell
*(Macmillan, £20)*



AS generally happens with English novelists of any seniority or public *reclame*, there are two current views of the late Sir Kingsley Amis (died 1995) and his late-fiftysomething filial understrapper Mart: what might be called the Waterstone's/broadsheet view, and the literary insider's view.

Again, as generally happens in these cases, each is almost diametrically opposed to the other. You might imagine from the amount of column inches lavished on them that Kingers and Mart, singly and collectively, bestride contemporary literature like a couple of behemoths.

The average literary critic, on the other hand, knows better, and is inclined, in fact, to mark both down as essentially one-book men: Kingsley for *Lucky Jim* (1954), Mart for 1984's *Money*. In each case, ominously enough, the disabling factor is style. Kingsley's later novels are the most contorted stodge, in which sentence after sentence has to be reread before yielding up its intent. As for Mart, well, one of his recent journo round-ups was called *The War Against Cliché*, and let's just say that the old boy lost.

Fascinating as all this doubtless is, does it really merit a buxom 400-page critical-cum-biographical survey whose presence on the "A" shelf of the public library next to Kingsley's memoirs, Mart's memoirs and half-a-dozen other items besides will probably be more than the wall-brackets can bear? No, because – let us be honest about these things – many of the books aren't up to the extended scrutiny which Mr Powell here seems to think they merit.

Mr P, who wrote an excellent biography of the poet Roy Fuller and apparently lives in Amis senior's second wife's Suffolk back garden, is a decent and sympathetic critic; but the spectacle of him crawling over the deficiencies of a novel like Kingsley's *Difficulties with Girls* (1988) or Mart's *Yellow Dog* (2003) can scarcely be borne. Inevitably, great claims have to be made (I just roared over the paragraph that begins: "Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin constitute one of English literature's notable double-acts: in this respect, they belong with Wordsworth and Coleridge or Auden and Isherwood") and the most zealous Amis-fancier will probably baulk at the page-long recapitulations of well-populated photos taken in the garden of St John's College, Oxford, circa 1942.

As the book grinds on, though – somewhere beyond its 200th page, say – there is a faint sense of something stirring beneath the ooze. The revelation eventually dragged into view is an amusing one, given the book's controlling premise. Not to put too fine a point on it, Mr P here is a great deal keener on Kingers' work – praised for its "generosity" – than he is on scapegrace Mart's. *London Fields* (1989) is, you'll be pleased to know, "in places a hideously written book", containing, among other defects, a "woozy strain of cosmic tosh which is going to reappear in *The Information*". As for that august work, it turns out to be "full of the most painful strivings after effect, because effects are all that it has to strive after. It is a novel almost wholly devoid of novelty." Lawks!

Signing off a discussion of *Yellow Dog*, Powell refers to two Amisian sentences – one from son's account of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, the other from pa on John Wain's *Living in the Present* – that have been drifting around in his head. The first goes: "After a while the reader is physically oppressed by the dishonesty of his prose." The second runs: "It isn't so much that it's a bad book... no, [it] goes further than that in not *seeming to be by a writer.*" Oh dear oh dear.

Curiously, then, *Amis & Son* ends up as a kind of assault rifle trained on Mart whose ammunition comes courtesy of his dad – Kingers interested in people and ordinariness, son fastidiously detached from real life and so on. What Powell doesn't consider – perhaps necessarily, as it would undermine much of his *raison d'être* – is why the specimen newspaper reader still feels like running a rake over these over-tilled fields. The answer is that, like Iris Murdoch, or Anthony Burgess, or half-a-dozen of the more colourful ornaments of recent Englit, Mart and his dad have lost whatever literary interest they may once have possessed. They are simply *personalities*, alluring arts world puppets brought out every so often to caper before a credulous public, while the books – the only significant things about them, after all – lie mouldering in the dust.

## Midden class childhood

**Kieron Smith, Boy**
James Kelman
*(Hamish Hamilton, £18.99)*

MY NAME is Kieron Smith and this is my story. When it starts I'm just a wee toty boy, I live in an old house near the river with the big ships and the tugs pulling them through the fog from the shipyards. We had mice in our old house, my granda showed us how to kill them. You had to wait for them and when they came out ye were to bash them, and if you got one that was great.

Although I don't say so, the place I am describing here is basically a slum and my maw didnay like it, she said it was dirty, she always wanted something better. But my Da's in the merchant and away at sea and times are tough. Still, there's a cosy glow about the way I describe it all, and my gran and granda and Uncle Billy and brother Matt and all my mates in the old place, and their houses that looked over each other, with the midden and the weekly trip to the baths and the boys all playing on the bombsites.

So that was me. I was happy even when I went to school, though I got into a few scrapes and fights. My Granda taught me how to fight. My Maw didnay like it when he did that but Granda said the boy needs to know how to defend himself. So that was me, getting into fights. But it wasn't my fault. It just happened. It wasn't something to greet about. If my Da was home and he found out I'd done something wrong he'd skelp me, and Matt would bash me if I bothered him when he was with his pals, even my Maw would give me a doing sometimes. So I was greeting, which means crying, though I tried not to. So it was a tough life but a picturesque one.

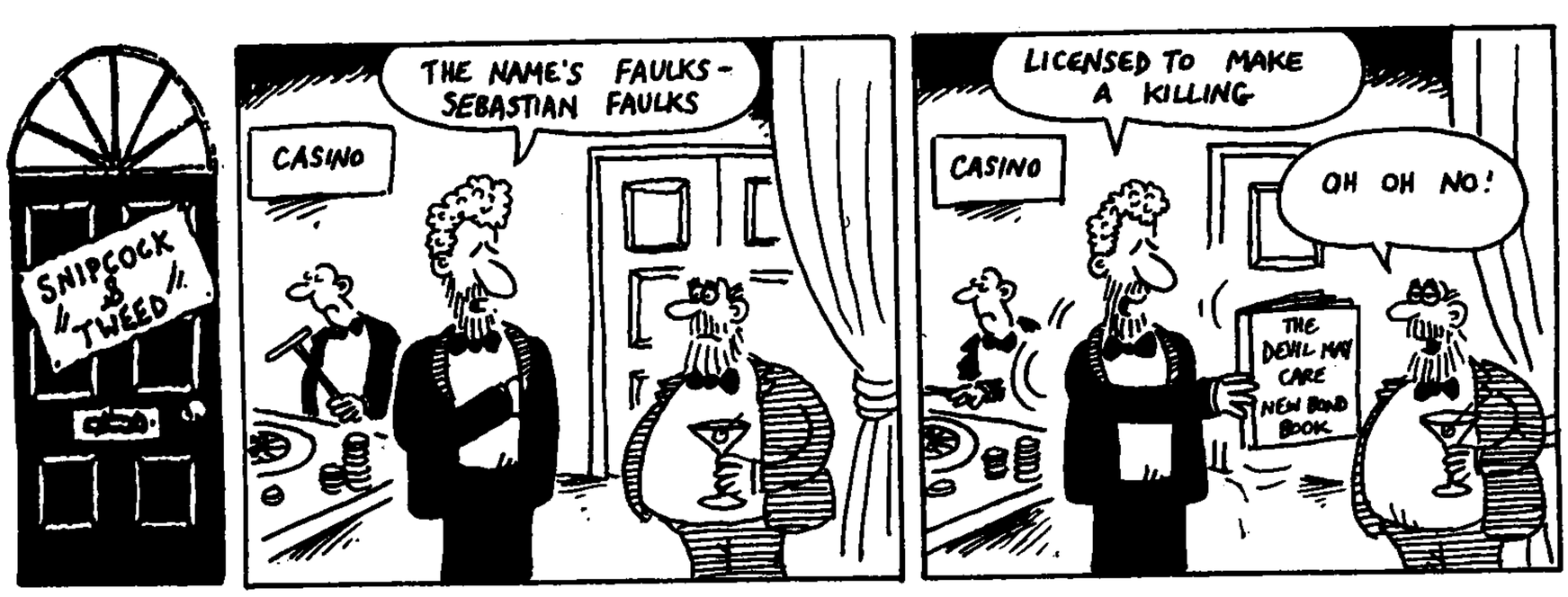
I'm writing it all down like this to make it more like the way a boy that age would think and speak, not so much stream of consciousness as intermittent puddles of consciousness. Where have we seen this before? This is the Molesworth stories rewritten by a Glaswegian avatar of Ernest Hemingway. No one is utterly wet and a weed but that is just another way of saying someone is a nancy boy or a poof, of which we have quite a bit of talk here, along with stuff about darkies and jewboys and, worst of all, Papes, ie RCs, because ye are of course a Proddy and yer granda was in the lodge and yer Uncle Billy goes on the marches.

So that was us. And this is an elaborate piece of postwar slum clearance nostalgia, basically. As a result of these latterday clearances, I and my family are shunted off to a new house on a scheme. And my Maw is delighted because we have, reverent pause, a bathroom. And a balcony with a view across all the other houses in the scheme. But I'm sad because I have to move to a new school. I have to wear a blazer and there are posh boys there who are queer and my maw thinks I should make friends with them because they are nicely spoken, unlike me with my picturesque local patois.

My maw was sad if I did not speak right. Oh Kieron, it is children and girls, do not say weans and lasses. Head, not heid. Dead, not deid. And so forth. If only she knew how I talk with my mates, the dirty words I fill with asterisks, sometimes not even bad ones like f**k or c**t, sometimes just embarrassing words like w***y or t*t or b***s which take quite a bit of working out. (An oddly refreshing change from some of this author's earlier books.)

So that was me, in the scheme, in the new scheme of things. And ye'll no be surprised to learn that it is all very repetitive and dreary, because although there are lots of individual scenes and incidents there is no story as such, no compelling narrative, just me growing up from being a wee boy greeting in a mouse-infested tenement kitchen to being a partially fledged teenager full of dirty thoughts and religious doubts and facing an uncertain future. Perhaps there will be a sequel in which I go to college and learn to be a famous prize-winning writer, or not as the case may be, but after more than 400 pages of these monotonous musings ye'd be greeting yer eyes out if ye had to read any more of it.

*Bookworm overleaf* ☛



# BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ "GORDON Brown on courage? What next, Tony Blair on humility, David Cameron on 'my struggle'?"

Thus joked Simon Jenkins when the then PM-designate's *Courage: Eight Portraits* appeared last June. Other reviews were just as dismissive, with only No 10 courtier Philip Gould creepily applauding. Yet that hasn't discouraged Brown or Bloomsbury from perhaps putting down a marker for a post-political career by announcing a sequel, *Wartime Courage* ("stories of decisive action in the searing heat of combat… of *sang froid* and sheer guts"), for November.

The critical carping this time will no doubt focus on the morale-boosting value for the desperate PM of tales of superhuman Second World War heroes under fire and pulling off victories or escapes single-handedly against gigantic odds. But it will make Brown the first prime minister since Churchill to be the author of a full-size book published while in office. Assuming he did the writing. Er, and assuming he's still in office.

■ COMMISERATIONS to the *Daily Mail*, whose proposed serialization of Andrew Hosken's biography of Ken Livingstone fell apart at the 11th hour.

It was in fact Tim Donovan, BBC London's political editor, who unwittingly put the kibosh on the *Mail*'s plans to run extracts from *Ken: The Ups and Downs of Ken Livingstone* when on 3 April he asked the newt fancier about his three "secret" children by two different women.

Donovan's story scooped the revelation in Hosken's biography, which was due to be published on 22 April, and left the *Mail* with nothing very interesting with which to smear the mayoral candidate.

So how did Donovan get his scoop? Hosken's publishers allowed hacks from the *Mail*, the *Times* and the *Grauniad* to see copies of the book in advance of publication, on condition they signed a confidentiality agreement.

It seems unlikely that *Mail* hacks would have blabbed to the Beeb, thereby ruining their own serialisation. The *Times*'s Francis Elliott has vehemently denied leaking the story – and anyway he is no friend of Donovan's. That leaves *Grauniad* hack and Ken supporter Hugh Muir, whom many suppose to be the source of the leak. He was on holiday last week and could not be contacted by the *Eye*, so it all remains mysterious. No doubt Ken himself was heart-broken when his enemies at the *Mail* had their thunder stolen!

■ MANY of the *Daily Mail*'s senior book reviewers have been enthusing or chuntering in the tabloid for at least 20 years, and while long-standing literary editor Jane Mays was running its old-fashioned books pages they must have felt they had jobs for life. Now, though, they're all a-flutter.

This follows the news that Sandra Parsons – a fugitive from the *Times*, where new editor James Harding removed her from overseeing the much-criticised, Femail-like Times 2 – is to replace Mays.

Parsons raised eyebrows by having a column in her own section at the *Times*, and on the evidence of these scribblings has no interest in books – unless they're written by female celebrities such as Nigella. So the likes of Val Hennessy and Peter Lewis may have to adjust to assessing the latest Jordan, Geri Halliwell or Sophie Dahl titles, and find themselves displaced by cheerleading Richard and Judy-style celebrity "critics" when the *Mail* reviews real books.

**Delia Smith**

■ PAIGE TOON, reviews editor of *heat* magazine, may be off on maternity leave at the moment, but she leaves a loyal staff behind her.

For what title is this receiving a rave five-star review in last week's issue, and whizzing straight to the top spot in *heat*'s "your top ten books" chart, "based on a combination of sales, reader comments, and the *heat* team's choices"?

Why it's *Johnny Be Good*, the second novel by one… Paige Toon!

■ LAST week's award of the Independent's Foreign Fiction Prize (co-sponsored by the Arts Council and Taittinger) at the Serpentine Gallery felt like a throwback to the 70s.

The winner – Belgium's Paul Verhaeghen, who translated himself – denounced America's "proto-fascist tendencies" and gave his entire £10,000 purse to a US civil-rights organisation. All rather embarrassing for the Arts Council's new boss, Alan Davey, who handed over the loot and a magnum of bubbly before trying unsuccessfully to melt into the background as Verhaegen excoriated the Bush regime and, by extension, other governments that collude with it.

■ SUAVE Nicholas Coleridge, managing director of Condé Nast, has been giving away thousands of copies of his *Easy Living* title with some of the company's other glossy magazines.

The June issue includes a large feature, complete with full-page picture, of writers Karen Doherty and Georgia Coleridge plugging their new book – "a no-nonsense guide to running a family".

These two women "know a thing or two about how to succeed as a parent", gushes the mag. They also know a thing or two about getting husbands to organise some blatant free publicity. Georgia Coleridge is married to, you guessed it, Nicholas Coleridge.

*'Bookworm'*

## MODESTY BLAZE

"This is the best book I have ever written… I have had professors at Cambridge and Harvard say that I am one of the finest living storytellers because of this novel. I have been compared to Dickens and Dostoevsky. And of course it has been a number one bestseller. The only problem is, where do I go from here? I could be setting myself up for another fall."

*– Jeffrey Archer talks to the Sydney* Sun Herald, *Australia, about himself and his new book, 27 April*

# Pseuds Corner

*With no display for the hours, minutes or seconds the Day & Night offers a new way of measuring time, splitting the universe of time into two fundamentally opposing sections: day versus night...*

*Chief Executive Yvan Arpa said: 'Anyone can buy a watch that shows time, but only a discerning customer can buy one that doesn't.'*

***Daily Telegraph***

Some people, there can be little doubt, are simply born into a passion or profession. Raised by the novelists Kingsley Amis and Elizabeth Jane Howard, who could have expected the young Martin Amis to grow up to be anything other than a writer, for example? When June Carter was born into country music's first family, her calling as a singer was already written in the stars; just as Calum Best's career as a serial womaniser was entirely predictable. But, for others, their passion is developed and matures, although it's every bit as inevitable as if it had been buried deep in their genes.

This was exactly the case for William fforde – real estate entrepreneur cum noted golf course photographer and publisher of the Pocket Guide to Golf series.

***Cache* + magazine salutes its owner**

Made up of photographs and film clips of the vast array of toilets and spaces the artist has urinated in since 2006, 'Man at His Toilet' is a raw representation of [Andreas] Tovan's daily routine and brings a highly personal and often overlooked subject into the public sphere. The work simultaneously provokes us to question the act of urination itself, whilst also hinting at the sexual taboos of male urination.

**Press release, Goldsmiths College**

Generally I don't work with round plates, I find them too restrictive.

**Chef ANTHONY FLINN, The Great British Menu, BBC2**

'People think I'm ungrateful' he says, his voice clotting slightly. 'I'm not, but I always feel my best work is to come. When a great friend of mine had his first retrospective, he went around it, weeping very discreetly and said 'Not enough, not enough.' I didn't know what he was talking about at that moment, but I know now.'

Hodgkin emits a stifled sob and then says that 'one day' he is sure a piece of work will be 'good enough.'

**Interview with HOWARD HODGKIN, *Times Magazine***

# Pseuds Corporate

- Generate alternative modes of developing transformative practice with young people.
- Articulate ways of using the existing constructs within contemporary theoretical and social discourses to challenge and change current practice and structures so that young people can be meaningfully engaged and empowered.
- Contribute to emerging ethical, emotional, social and intellectual discourses that build on democratic principles of rights, justice, equality and difference.

**'An International Conference on Young People', University of Strathclyde**

CONTRIBUTORS: Roland King, Niki fforde, Huw Lemmey, Jake Allen, John Roberts, Anne Ritchie.

**£10 paid for all entries**

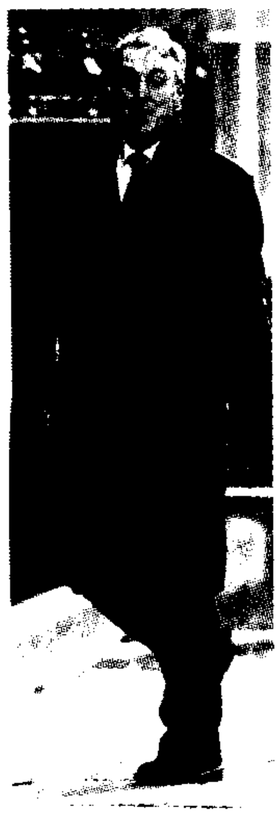
# IN THE BACK

THE ACTIS SCANDAL

## The price is frightful

**THE extraordinary lengths to which Britain's publicly-owned overseas development fund CDC went to give away 60 percent of its fund management arm to its own bosses have emerged from details of the valuation process obtained by the *Eye* from the National Audit Office.**

Although the final business plan before the deal was approved by the then Development Secretary Hilary Benn (pictured) in April 2004 showed the fund management business – re-branded Actis – predicting $55m profits in its first five years, a report from an "independent" CDC committee reveals that the valuation, which turned out to be £0.4m, assumed "a $10m deficit over 5 years".



But how did the valuer, KPMG, arrive at such a *gloomy forecast* for what immediately became a hugely lucrative business? A report from the government's advisers Campbell Lutyens reveals that KPMG "established, through representations from the CDC group, the current financial position and prospects facing the business, the expected operating results and the current view of the cash generating capabilities of the business". In other words, the men who would buy the business were presenting the dire vision of its prospects that happily suppressed the price they had to pay for it.

KPMG even took a dim view of the bosses who own Actis, led by senior partner Paul Fletcher, claiming that their "lack of track record impacts negatively on the intrinsic value of such a management team". Yet the "independent committee" recommending the deal to Benn boasted of the "private sector investment management credentials" of the very same men as a key reason for it to go ahead.

After a further 70 percent discount because the new owners were locked in for five years, the result was a business that KPMG judged to be of "minimal value", translating into the nominal £0.4m Fletcher and co. coughed up for it. They *then instantly* bagged, er, £2.3m in "post-transactional bonuses" for their trouble. The new-born Actis would generate profits for the bosses of £8m in its first year and see Fletcher coining in £1m annually (four times what he got as a CDC executive).

Most amazing of all, though, is that the big prize for the new Actis bosses, namely taking a cut on selling the investments they manage ("carried interest" in private equity-speak), was ignored in the valuation and statements to parliament on the sale. Campbell Lutyens estimated this to be worth $73m up to 2012 on a "base case + 10% outcome". Given the £281m profit on the sale of CDC's power assets last year (see last *Eye*), even this will probably be exceeded.

As Campbell Lutyens put it, the new arrangements for running a development fund "provide a substantial incentive for [Actis] to improve performance on existing investments and manage aggressive exit strategies". For the businesses owned by CDC in some of the world's poorest countries that translates into: milk them and flog them off quick.

DEFENCE SPENDING

## Big Four, little sense, huge cost

**WHILE defence bosses argue over which big projects to slash in a desperate effort to save cash, they still can't break their expensive management consultancy habit.**

Parliamentary questions from Labour's Jim Cousins and the Tories' Mark Hoban reveal the Ministry of Defence still relies on the "big four", despite having been told to rein in the consultancy spending.

Last year KPMG was awarded a £4m contract to "streamline the MoD head office" as in-house staff do not have "the framework nor the experience... with which to run a change programme on this scale". Rearranging the office chairs might be great news for the consultants, but whether it's what frontline armed forces need right now is less certain.

Nor are KPMG's rivals Deloitte, PwC and Ernst & Young being left out. All four firms have been awarded identically valued £6.9m deals for "support of PFI and partnering projects". Among Deloitte's many other recent contracts, including £2m to act as "strategic client adviser" on a submarine project, was £830,000 for "reviews of non-competitive government contracts" – like its own PFI advisory one, presumably.

Meanwhile the Commons defence select committee recently reported that the equipment and support arm (formerly procurement and logistics) of the MoD alone is spending £110m on consultants this year, much of it because it can't train its over-stretched staff in the latest technologies. Yet under Gordon Brown's "efficiency programme", thousands of jobs are going, prompting the committee to declare: "We consider it inexplicable for the MoD both to be reducing the numbers of staff and telling those that remain that there is no time to train them." Once again Brown's "efficiency" equates to knackering a public service and bringing in the consultants.

PS: Amid the turmoil several senior MoD figures – the finance, policy and personnel directors, as well as permanent secretary Bill Jeffrey's number two – are all leaving in the next weeks. Who to fill their shoes? Surely not more management consultants!

## The draining budget

**THE justification for the government's faltering plans to privatise defence training are rapidly falling apart.**

The scheme, initially proposed in 2001 by the then defence secretary Geoff "Buff" Hoon, involved two PFI deals worth £16bn to farm out training on everything from piloting aircraft carriers to military policing. On the MoD's own admission the privatisation was being pursued mainly because it allowed investment for security and logistics training under "package 2" to be kept off the books using the usual PFI accountancy trick (see *Eye* 1177). So when package 2 was dropped last year, any justification for PFI disappeared.

But the £11bn "package 1", covering equipment maintenance and operation training, goes ahead anyway under a deal being negotiated with a consortium, Metrix, comprising QinetiQ, EDS, Raytheon and others.

Now this is looking decidedly shaky too. Tory MP Mark Pritchard, whose Midlands constituency stands to lose thousands of jobs to Labour-dominated South Wales under the plans, recently asked the MoD how much the privatisation project would save the taxpayer. "The broad projection of the through life (30 years) savings of the DTR Package 1 project," replied defence minister Bob Ainsworth, "is approximately £400m..."

Which is odd because two years ago the MoD had claimed: "We anticipate benefits in the order of £3bn." As £2bn of this related to package 1, £1.6bn in supposed savings have since disappeared without trace.

Cost-savings predicted for PFI deals are notoriously optimistic anyway, and invariably vanish altogether once the deals are signed. Whether the £400m – at £13m a year, small change in the £37bn defence budget – survives and justifies the obvious risks of privatising training on tanks and nuclear submarines, for example, looks doubtful to say the least.

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

## The flaw sight saga

**THE two men at the centre of the country's oldest miscarriage of justice claims – a 1967 gangland murder – will have to take their fight to clear their names to the European courts or die protesting their innocence.**

Last month Dennis Stafford and Michael Luvaglio (pictured) exhausted the legal system here when the high court threw out their application for a judicial review of the decision by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) not to refer their case back to the court of appeal.

The two men's convictions have long been a matter of public and political concern. Last year the CCRC stunned lawyers, supporters and MPs of all parties after it declared that there was no new evidence that would give rise to the real possibility that the convictions would be quashed. It was not enough that the evidence leading to the convictions was flawed, that material pointing to the men's innocence was concealed or that the judge's summing-up was biased.

The pair were convicted of the execution-style murder of Angus Sibbett, who was found dead from gunshot wounds in the back of his Jaguar in South Hetton, Durham, early on 5 January 1967.

After a tip-off, the pair were arrested within 18 hours of the discovery of the body, even though they had an almost watertight alibi: they were 16 miles away in a nightclub in Newcastle where they were seen by many. How the two men managed to ambush Sibbett's car, kill him, drive it a further couple of miles to Pesspool Bridge, clean themselves up and stroll back into the club without a hair out of place was never explained.

Over the next few years, it emerged that 164 statements had been taken by police but withheld from the defence. After a campaign by MPs and commentators, the case was first sent back to the appeal court in 1972. At a preliminary hearing, the court decided to hear 40 of the witnesses and one of the judges, Mr Justice Croom-Johnson, was appointed to take depositions from them. But when it came to the full hearing, he was ill and could not sit. Thus the only judge who had had the opportunity to assess the truthfulness of the witnesses was not on the final panel.

The cornerstone of the pair's submission to the CCRC was that the evidence of the 164 witnesses was never properly considered because of the illness of Mr Justice Croom-Johnson. Luvaglio also claimed that modern DNA and fingerprint testing could prove who actually killed Sibbett. The trouble is, all the exhibits have now been destroyed. Luvaglio, a devout Catholic, has always said his nightmare is that he will die a convicted murderer. As he is now 70 and in poor health, that nightmare has every chance of becoming a reality unless the European courts can be persuaded to intervene.

*In the Back continues overleaf* ➤

THAMES LOCKS

# Sales of the riverbank

**ONE of the Thames lock keepers who protected hundreds of homes from flooding by his quick action last year was hailed as "the very best of Britain" and given a local hero award by Gordon Brown. But one year on from the flooding, many of the river's lock keepers are set to lose their homes – putting other people's homes at risk from the rising waters.**

Besides helping boaters to get through the locks, the keepers operate the weirs, sluices and locks to maintain water levels during floods or droughts. The Environment Agency, which is responsible for the locks on the Thames, announced last month that it is to flog off 10 of the lock houses that traditionally come with the job and privately rent out 12 more. It claims the move will not affect navigation safety or flood control on the river and that keepers no longer need to live next to the river because "houses were originally provided when working hours were longer and before telephones and cars made communications and getting around as easy as they are today".

Telephones and cars have been around for some time now, yet one of the properties to be sold, at Boulters Lock in Maidenhead (pictured), was bought by the agency just 11 years ago. Property near the river in places like Oxford, Wallingham and Windsor doesn't come cheap, so lock keepers on just £16,000 a year are likely to have quite a long drive through terrible weather to respond to a late night emergency.

One Environment Agency employee, who asked not to be named, told the *Eye*: "We're only just holding our own against this silted up river as it is."

The Environment Agency ended a decades-long continuous dredging programme of the Thames in the 1990s, arguing that the river was "self-scouring". But river-users and groups representing communities who live along the riverbank claim the river is now far more silted up and likely to flood – making locks and weirs more important and harder to operate.

PS: The buyers of canalside properties sold off by British Waterways (see *Eye* 1187) have found the canal a difficult neighbour and created problems for normal waterway activities. The new owners of a lock house on the Basingstoke Canal ended up in public nuisance proceedings against a long-established nearby drydock, while the owners of new flats on land sold next to the Grand Union Canal ended up in a battle with a boatyard that had existed since the canal was created.

HMRC JUNKETS

# Trough at the top

**IT'S not just Chancellor Alistair Darling sucking up to big business with his new "business-government forum on tax". The taxman himself is taking the schmoozing to new heights with a series of dinners for "business leaders" at a smart Westminster restaurant.**

The soirées, initiated in the midst of HM Revenue and Customs' programme to cut 25,000 jobs, involve chairman Dave Hartnett – who lists "food, wine" among his recreations in *Who's Who* – and half a dozen of his directors tucking in with an invited "business leader" in a private room at Shepherd's, SW1. The four dinners so far have set the taxpayer back more than £2,500 and averaged £82 a head, including £25-worth of drink each. Guests so far have been: Richard Lapthorne, chairman of Cable and Wireless; BT finance director Hanif Lalani; finance director of National Grid Steve Lucas; and Ernst & Young chairman Mark Otty.

Taking the E&Y boss out for dinner on the taxpayer is certainly an interesting ploy. Not so long ago HMRC described his firm as "probably the most aggressive, creative, abusive provider of [tax avoidance] schemes and arrangements among the major accountancy firms". What's more, E&Y had just been exposed at a tribunal as the architect of a ruse – sold to scores of top companies - that sought to deprive the exchequer of around £1bn through the "deliberate mislabelling" of payments.

HMRC says the dinners give the businessmen "an opportunity to share with us their views on the delivery of the UK tax system". A spokesman defended the events by claiming discussions "are sometimes best conducted outside the work environment... The improved functioning of the HMRC/business relationship will repay the cost of a few dinners many many [sic] times over".

Oddly, the same logic doesn't apply to tax investigators' jobs that also repaid their costs many times over before they were slashed.

CORPORATE SPYING

# Felicitous, Kendall?

**WHO hired Toby Kendall to pretend to be an activist inside anti-airport group "Plane Stupid" (see *Eye* 1208)? There may be a clue in the fact that Kendall was also pretending to be a campaigner inside protest group Hands Off Iraqi Oil.**

Kendall put on his Palestinian-style scarf to attend their meetings from December 2007 onwards but raised suspicions with his unconvincing disguise and suspect habit of turning up very promptly to meetings. Classically aware activists in the group were also suspicious of his email address – "Menelaus", the name of the Spartan king whose soldiers hid inside the Trojan Horse. Hands Off Iraqi Oil protested outside the 2007 annual general meeting of Shell, whom they accuse of lining up to exploit the war-torn country's most valuable asset, and bothered the firm in other ways.

By coincidence, Shell has a habit of hiring fake activists to spy on its opponents. In the 1990s a supposedly left-wing documentary maker called Manfred Schlickenrieder was exposed as a spy, passing on to Shell details of campaigns against the oil firm in Nigeria. Schlickenrieder worked for Hakluyt, a British "intelligence" firm set up by ex-MI6 officers (*Eyes passim*).

Back then Shell admitted that it hired Hakluyt but said it knew nothing of Schlickenrieder's methods. Could it be that Hakluyt hired C2I and Agent Toby as subcontractors? Hakluyt did not return *Private Eye*'s calls on the matter. While Shell denied knowledge of Agent Toby, it did not respond when asked if it still used Hakluyt.

BA, which may have been interested in Kendall's undercover work in the "Plane Stupid" campaign, said it "would not discuss security issues". It is worth noting that there are strong links between BA and Hakluyt: BA's head of legal affairs, Robert Webb, is on the main board of Hakluyt, while former BA boss Sir Rod Eddington is on Hakluyt's international advisory board, as is former BA director Lord Renwick.

BUPA

# A sorry tale

**NEWS that Bupa chief executive Val Gooding is stepping down and leaving Britain's largest private healthcare provider "in rude health" has angered one former client who has battled with the company for years over the death of her mother.**

Three years ago the *Eye* reported how Bupa threatened legal action to halt Dee Sedgwick's efforts to extract an apology and explanation for the company's neglectful treatment of her mother, Joan Gaddes, in one of its care homes.

Mrs Gaddes, aged 82 , had died in hospital in September 2002, a month after being admitted from Highfield, a residential home in Halesworth, Suffolk, suffering dehydration and weight loss. Pressure sores on her back and heels had become gangrenous.

In the weeks and days leading up to Mrs Gaddes' admission to hospital, her daughter had expressed concerns about her failing health and loss of weight and about the company's failure to do anything meaningful to reduce summer heatwave temperatures within the home. She had even asked for her mother to be placed on a drip because she appeared so dehydrated, only to be told it wasn't necessary.

Angry that the care home and managers did not appear to be taking her complaints seriously, Mrs Sedgwick had written to Bupa's senior executives, including Val Gooding, at their homes, setting out her grievances. Bupa's initial response was a hand delivered letter from City law firm Rosenblatts, threatening legal action for harassment of staff who said they felt "threatened". Undeterred, Mrs Sedgwick decided she too would deliver her letters by hand as well as by fax. "Quite frankly I would have liked them to take me to court to get a public airing of my complaints. But they were never going to do that," she told the *Eye*.

Instead Bupa finally agreed to fund legal representation for the family and have a round table meeting with Paul Newton of Bupa's legal department and Matthew Flinton, head of care services. Val Gooding was said to be on the end of a phone should it prove necessary.

The result? A three-page detailed letter of regret and apology, a damning indictment of the home's care of Mrs Gaddes and a final vindication of Mrs Sedgwick's prolonged fax and letter campaign to Bupa's chiefs.

Bupa admitted not properly monitoring changes in her weight and health; not properly assessing her nutritional needs and fluid intake; and not taking proper care to ensure she did not develop pressure sores. "Had your mother's weight loss and fluid intake requirements been properly assessed and monitored, it may have led to your mother's health having been more closely monitored by the NHS. We apologise for this failure."

It also went on to apologise for not carrying out an assessment before she entered Highfield, which Mrs Sedgwick maintained was not suited to caring for Mrs Gaddes who had mild to moderate dementia; for losing her belongings including her false teeth; for not taking adequate steps to ameliorate the heatwave conditions at the home; for "unsatisfactory" administration of her medication; and for initially failing to provide key documents to those carrying out the independent inspections because they were "missing".

"We also regret and apologise for the length of time, which it has taken to provide you and your family with appropriate resolution in respect of your concerns," said the letter. It had taken five years.

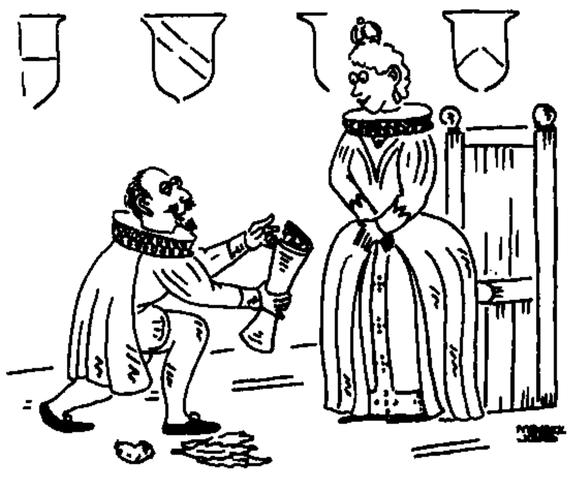
Unfortunately Mrs Sedgwick's battle is not quite over. The Commission for Social Care Inspection has completed no fewer than six versions of its report into Mrs Gaddes' care, which Mrs Sedgwick says has failed to get to grips with what went wrong at Highfield – not least because the CSCI dismissed some of her complaints that have now been admitted by Bupa.

***You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk***

# In the City

AN investigation has been launched by the former Department of Timidity & Inaction – now the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform – into a company that has links to party person and self-styled multimillionaire and peer, "Lord" Edward Davenport.

Officials from the company investigation branch (CIB) have been appointed under the companies act to investigate Centurion (Private Equity). Centurion was subsequently wound up by a creditor last month, several months after the unannounced CIB probe began.



*"Also from the New World, Your Majesty, a portfolio of sub-prime mortgages"*

Centurion falsely claimed to have Pricewaterhouse-Coopers as its auditor, Norton Rose as its law firm, Barclays as its banker and even Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs as its second largest shareholder. It also claimed to be engaged in energy investments in Poland and Bulgaria, as well as hosting a website full of cyberspace mumbo-jumbo.

In reality, it appears to have been little more than a sophisticated "LF" (long firm) fraud ordering large amounts of computer equipment and other goods that disappeared soon after they were delivered to its registered address in Mayfair – which it vacated early in 2007 – or a lock-up storage facility in Chertsey, Surrey.

Centurion was dormant until 2004, when it changed its name to suggest it was in the private equity business. Several people were listed as directors but whether they all exist under the names given is less than certain. What is certain is that the company was wound up on 8 April on a petition from Hardware.Com, which was owed more than £30,000, mainly for laptops. The total debts of Centurion – the Official Receiver has been appointed liquidator – could be more than £350,000, although there are suspected to be other related scams that could double that figure.

Evidence involving Centurion is being studied by several police forces, including the Metropolitan Police, following complaints from victims of the fraud.

Centurion filed accounts for a first trading period to November 2006 just over a year ago. These showed a turnover of £3.8m and profits before tax of £1.2m, with net assets of more than £4m. These figures were stated to have been audited and signed by PwC. Not true. The signature for the firm was a crude forgery. PwC never acted for Centurion; nor did Norton Rose, whose name also appeared in the accounts as legal advisers. And Barclays had never been bankers to the company.

In a highly unusual move, Norton Rose and PwC went to court to have their names removed from the Centurion accounts at Companies House, and their wish was granted on 29 February. The High Court order found that Norton Rose "has never been instructed as solicitors" and that PwC "has never been appointed as auditors" by Centurion.

Goldman Sachs told *Private Eye* that it also had no connection to or investment in Centurion.

As usual, Davenport is nowhere publicly to be seen at Centurion. The directors still standing – two in London and one in New York – could not be contacted. However, there are several links to "Lord" Eddie – he bought the title – that suggest he may not be totally unaware of Centurion (Private Equity).

Centurion's parent company, Centurion International Holdings, is based at the same company management outfit on the Caribbean island of Nevis used in another Davenport-linked company where false accounts full of inflated figures were filed. This was Gresham Limited (*Eye* 1189), which was also controlled from Nevis. The Gresham auditors denied signing the accounts filed at Companies House, saying they had resigned because they had not been paid. Also controlled from Nevis was the Davenport-linked Southern Cross office property group, which collapsed in 2005, owing £20m. Davenport did not appear as a director of either Gresham or Southern Cross but was firmly in the background.

One of his associates at Southern Cross was Alex King, who sometimes lived in the mews behind the former Sierra Leone high commission building in London that Davenport owns via another Nevis company. One Centurion creditor who obtained judgment for £9,000 before the winding-up was high-end paint and paper suppliers Farrow & Ball. They delivered several hundred litres of paint to Centurion (Private Equity) at 4 Weymouth Mews – part of Davenport's 33 Portland Place property. Four of those invoices were marked for the attention of Alex King.

"They never paid a penny," says Farrow & Ball financial controller Kevin Eatwell. The amounts of paint supplied suggest it was used to redecorate Portland Place, which is used for film and fashion shoots (King handles the bookings for Portland Place) as well as the type of parties that attract the tabloids and may well explain how Fast Eddie knows some influential and helpful people. Previous complaints about the late-night activities in Weymouth Mews resulted in no action, although attracting police attention on at least one occasion.

Attempts to discuss Centurion with King or Davenport were unsuccessful. Davenport has always denied any wrongdoing regarding Southern Cross – and presumably any other company.

The company secretary for Centurion was CED Nominees, which provides office services to multiple companies. One of those companies – since dissolved – was Southern Cross (City). One of its directors was Bruce Anderson, both chairman of Southern Cross Group and a shareholder in a previous failed Davenport property venture, Capricorn Group Holdings, which crashed in 2003 owing £48m.

A former Gresham director, David Evans, was also a director of Centurion (UK) MGT, a subsidiary of Centurion (Private Equity). He was also a director of CED – as was King. CED provided secretarial services to a number of Gresham-linked companies.

Davenport has led a charmed life since his one conviction – overturned on appeal – for VAT evasion on ticket sales in the early 90s. Charges of defrauding Gleneagles Hotel in 1998 were dropped, while no action followed the Capricorn collapse. The DTI passed the results of its investigation into Southern Cross to the Serious Farce Office, which has so far failed to take any action. Now its successor and the police are examining Centurion.

The DBERR has limited powers to act against Davenport because he is never a director of the companies that go down, so there is no option for disqualification proceedings. It has to pass on any other action to either the police or the SFO.

When the DTI, backed by Scotland Yard, raided Davenport's six-storey mansion in March 2006, they found more than £50,000 in cash and several expensive Rolex watches in a safe, and another £17,000 on top of a wardrobe.

Despite this background, Davenport's website shows the roster of the rich and famous as well as rock stars and fashionistas photographed in his company. They include real businessmen such as High Street billionaire Sir Philip Green and easyJet founder Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, as well as Alastair Campbell and Prince Albert of Monaco. Davenport claims to be resident in the Mediterranean tax haven. Doubtless all those pictured with him are blissfully unaware of Fast Eddie's background and activities.

The new man at the SFO, Richard "Grey Man" Alderman, has announced that he will be more interested in consumer-related fraud such as boiler rooms pumping worthless shares and circular money fraud "Ponzi" schemes. These are usually based abroad. Perhaps he should start nearer home by dusting off the Davenport file.

WORD from inside the SFO is that "Grey Man" is planning a cull of senior figures as part of the plan for executing the reforms proposed in the still unpublished report by former New York prosecutor Jessica de Grazia.

First expected to go is deputy director James Kellock, who was promoted in December 2005 and is unlikely to be replaced. Some assistant directors could also be moving.

De Grazia is said to have been highly critical of many of those in charge of SFO cases, and the inspiring opening message to the troops from Alderman was that there is a lot wrong and change is necessary. This is said to have done wonders for already low morale.

MORALE is also clearly not high at the City's main regulator, the Fundamentally Supine Authority. The results of a 2007 staff survey conducted in September and October, just after the Northern Wreck fiasco, do little to improve its poor reputation.

Chief executive Hector Sants referred to one depressing finding in a letter to Plaid Cymru MP Adam Price in March. This was that a third of staff intended to be working elsewhere within two years. However, the full report by Ipsos MORI, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, is even more depressing.

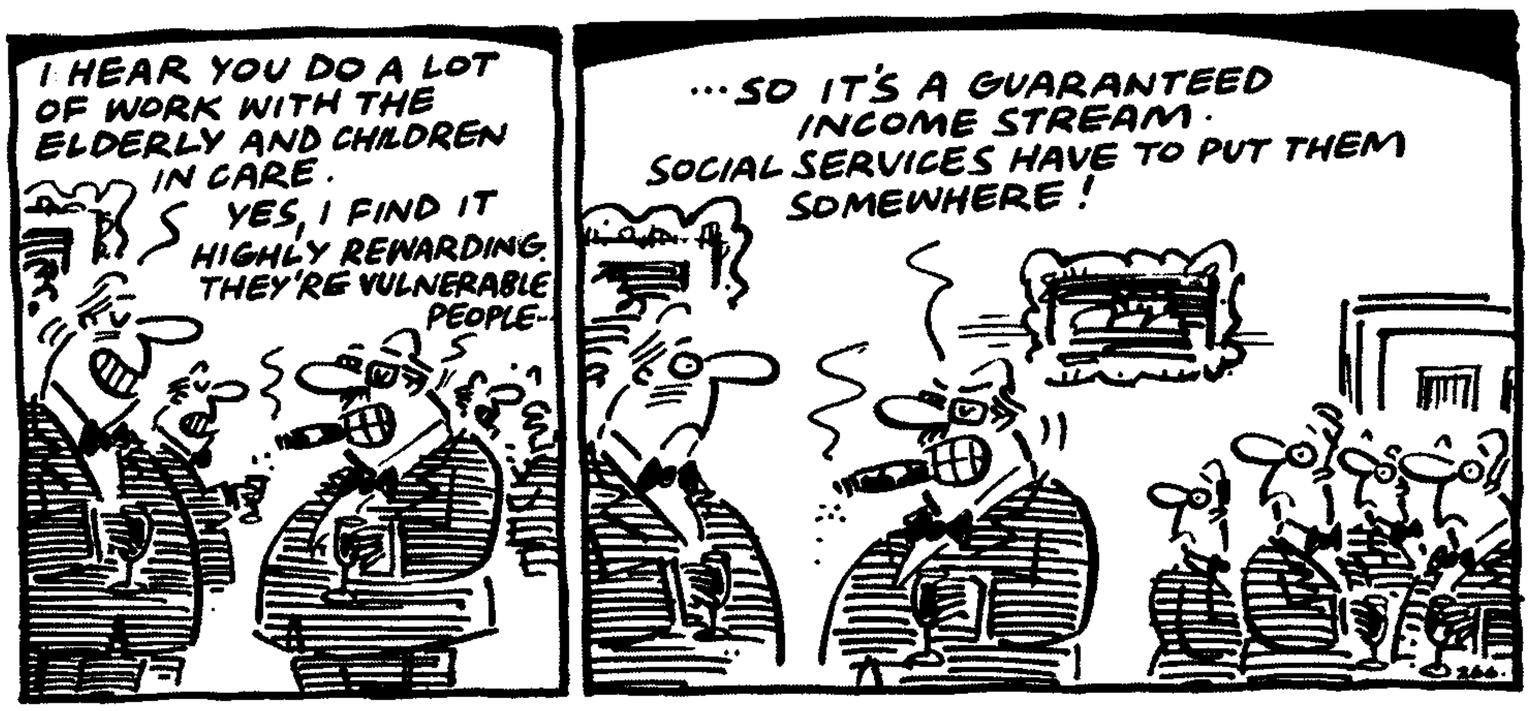
Among the bottom-scoring questions for the 2,100 staff who replied anonymously – 80 percent of the FSA workforce – were:

- Aware of improvements resulting from last staff survey in my business unit – 18 percent.
- Aware of improvements since the last staff survey in the FSA as a whole – 20 percent.
- I feel I have a clear career path – 25 percent.

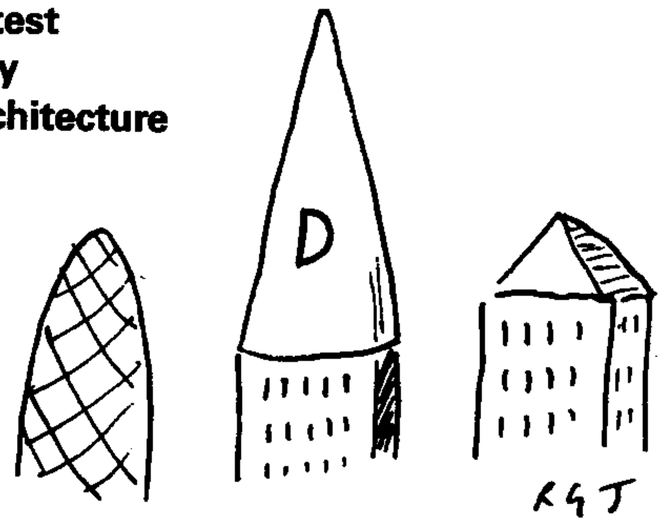
☛ *See over...*

## THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


I HEAR YOU DO A LOT OF WORK WITH THE ELDERLY AND CHILDREN IN CARE.
YES, I FIND IT HIGHLY REWARDING. THEY'RE VULNERABLE PEOPLE.
...SO IT'S A GUARANTEED INCOME STREAM. SOCIAL SERVICES HAVE TO PUT THEM SOMEWHERE!

## Latest City Architecture




*"It reflects the financial acumen of the modern city"*

● Good ideas and best practice are openly shared across the organisation – 26 percent.

● Opportunities for face-to-face communication with your managing director – 26 percent.

Of the respondents, only 45 percent intended to be at the FSA in two years – 24 percent expected to depart for the private financial sector. One reason was clearly better pay: only 36 percent were satisfied they were paid fairly compared to others in similar jobs in other organisations.

Questioned about their line managers, only 37 percent felt they effectively managed poor performance. Witness Northern Wreck. Asked about the FSA leadership, only 53 percent agreed they would deliver a successful long-term future for the regulator, while only 51 percent said they had confidence in the leadership and even less – 45 percent – said they trusted the leadership.

## PLANET FOOTBALL
### Chelsea

NO WONDER Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich is demanding the European Champions Cup after losing out to Manchester United in the Premier League for a second consecutive year.

The accounts for Chelsea Limited, through which he owns the club, show that as at June 2007 he had increased his loans from £489m to £578m. Since then its subsidiary, Chelsea FC, has repaid the £36m balance of the 1997 Euroloan. So the loans – which are interest-free and on 18 months' notice – are likely by now to have gone over the £600m mark, even ignoring the net £30m-plus spent on buying new players or paying off former manager Jose Mourinho.

As for being self-financing and breaking even by 2010, as suggested by chief executive Peter Kenyon, well, the club reduced the loss – from £80m the previous year, when they won the Premier League, to £75m last year, when they did not.

### Fulham

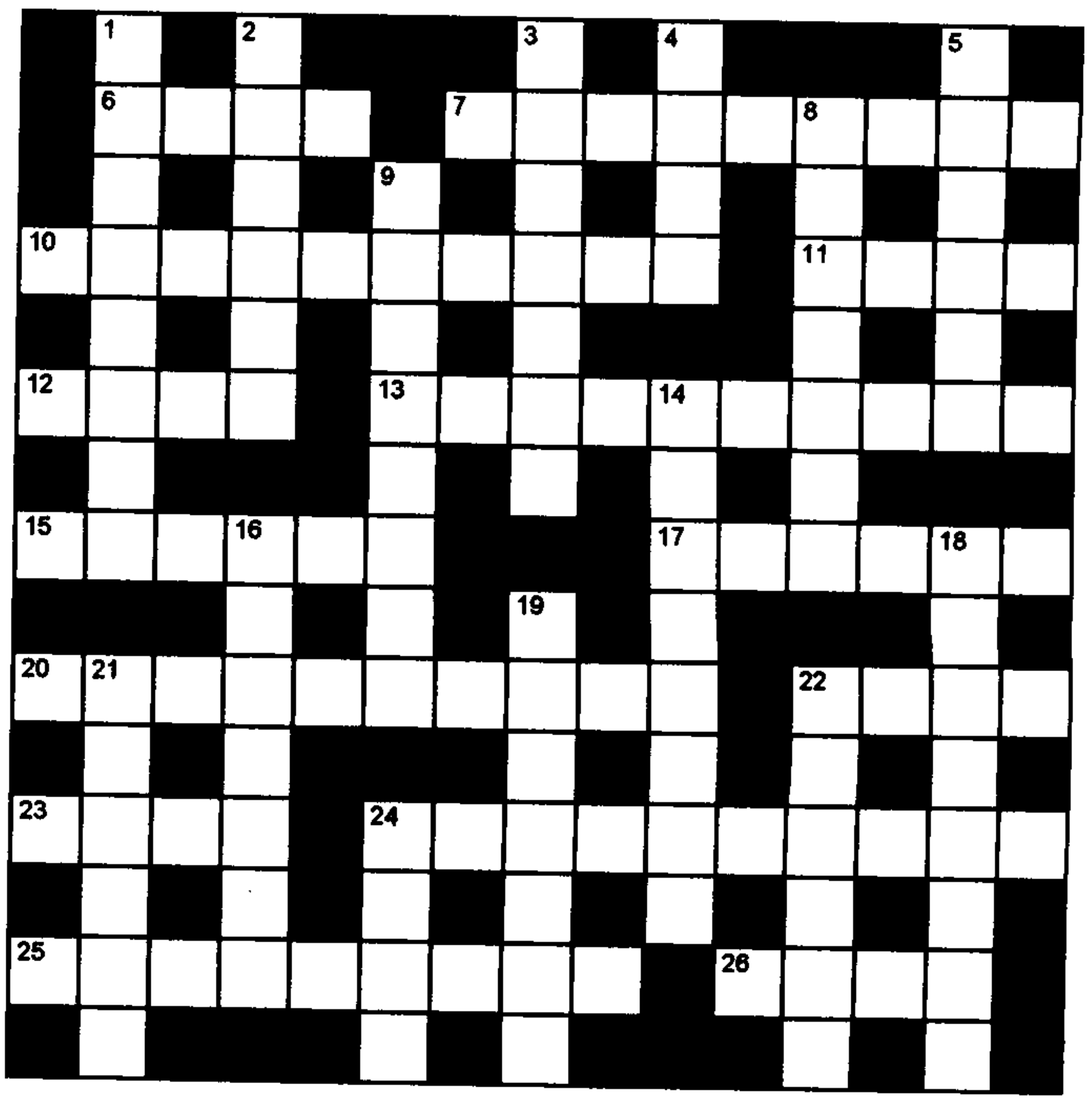
A RELIEVED Mohamed Fayed and his bankers can look forward to another season in the Premier League after Fulham's last-day escape from relegation. The phoney pharaoh clearly needs all the financial help he can get at Fulham, which is as ever dependent on his British Virgin Island-sourced largesse.

Accounts for the club to June 2007 – it lost a similar £15m to the previous year – and its UK parent, Fulham Football Leisure, show that the Fortis Bank increased its facility from £9m to £14m at the start of the season. Fayed has since bought out the remaining interest held by the Muddyman family, who sold him the club in 1997. What was paid is not declared.

A new BVI-based parent company, AIT Leisure Holdings, was owed £155m after writing off £9.5m as part of the takeover deal. Originally Fayed was to repay himself £45m this year. But that and other debts have been rescheduled. Fulham Football Leisure must now repay AIT £10m a year from 2012 for ten years, while it still has to repay another £55m in 2017. Just how that will be achieved when the club loses so much every year is unclear – like most of the Fayed finances.

*'Slicker'*

# EYE CROSSWORD 365
by Cyclops



**£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 22 May 2008**

**Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk**

### ACROSS

6 Flood survivor's lack of expression of sexual satisfaction? (4)
7 Mostly worried about nothing following business procedure to divert motions (9)
10 See 16dn.
11 One-on-one at work leads to bad character (4)
12 See 23ac.
13 Gnome TV broadcast includes Brenda and new Labour ministers (10)
15 Flipping bollocks about rock group "Tingle" (6)
17 The old guard talk affectionately before and partly during post-menopausal treatment (6)
20 Woman standing by bloke (died the day before) – credit to Londoners? (4,3,3)
22 See 4dn.
23/12 Glance from performing topless sex partner captivating civil engineer (4-4)
24 He's often mounted Brenda after Daisy and drink (10)
25 British plonker, that is, an alternative to Ray, bust in here (9)
26 County ditching small idiot (4)

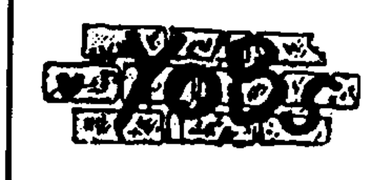
### DOWN

1 Really enjoy being into solvent briefly, having an easy time (2,6)
2 What Brown represents: a new Balfour? F-off! (6)
3 Can, crushed and stuffed in old bloke having depression (7)
4/22ac. Fag's boxers possibly getting stiff (8)
5 Girl, fancy car, top off, bloke getting end away (6)
8 Sting roping in Brown and, later, Cyclops to mount a hit (7)
9 Celebrity parasite supporter of capital punishment? No, oddly (6-2)
14 Burst into laughter when Conservatives' leader goes "Accumulated points" (6,2)
16/10ac. Prick's excuses for Westminster perks? (7,10)
18 US conservative types and what they hate: strangling pet (8)
19 Bollocking wet in Bristol to an Aussie, Warren (7)
21 Tossers whose output is frozen? (6)
22 Di going spare, kicked it, Di kicked it (6)
24 Cocaine dose for Bill (4)

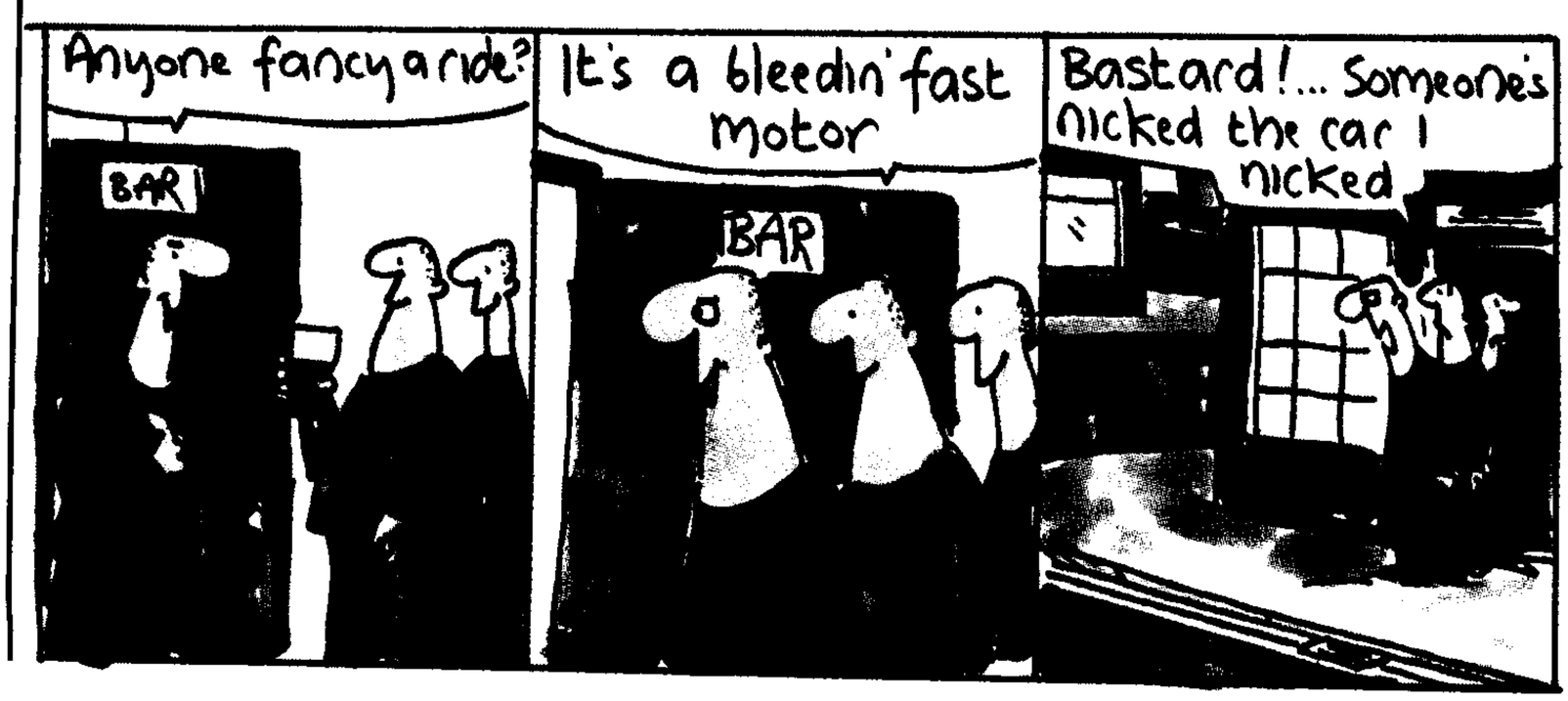
**Crossword 364 winner: TIM CARVER**

ACROSS: 9 Uluru 10 Fairy tale 11 Press-stud 12 Pilot 13/14 Rotten Boroughs 16 Utterly 18 Shiatsu 20 Headcase 22 Sex mad 24 Royal 25 Chatlines 28 Dungarees 29 Gucci.

DOWN: 1/27 Jump suit 2 Rupert 3 Bum steer 4 E-fit 5 Birdhouse 6 Nympho 7 Gaslight 8 Death squad 13 Rough trade 15 Eye socket 17 Toadying 19 Ideology 21 Collar 23 Monica 26 Arse.




HUSBAND



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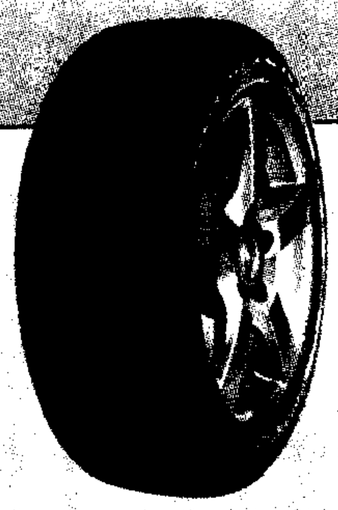
AUTO EXPRESS
BEST BUY
2007

▶ Innovation #1643, is also known to our engineers as DynamicDrain-TRED water dispersal technology. It's this that gives the HydraGrip its exceptional grip in the wet. But don't take our word for it, AutoExpress has declared it 'Best Buy' and described it as "brilliant in the wet", which means increased safety for you and your family. For more information visit www.mygoodyear.co.uk



GOODYEAR

HYDRAGRIP ◀
▼

BECAUSE NOT ALL TYRES ARE THE SAME –

# reassuringly expensive

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OM SAI RAM

# A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

## A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that – a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up – he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more. 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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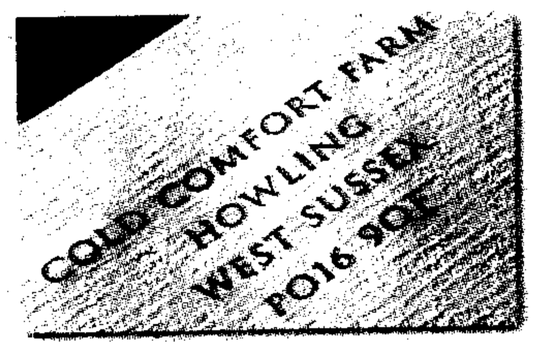


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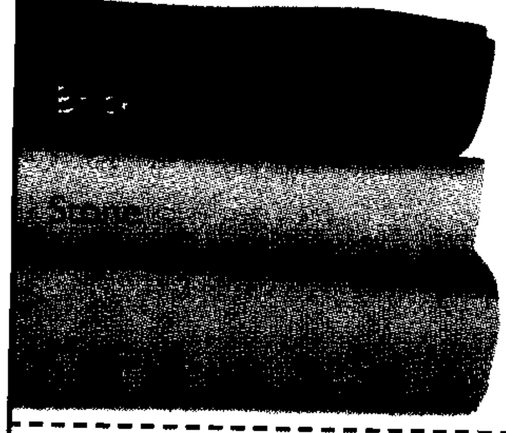


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